VOLUME 2

WYNDHAM HERITAGE REVIEW, STAGE 2 (PART)

RESIDENTIAL PLACES AND PRECINCTS: THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY, AS AMENDED 2023 (INTERIM REPORT)

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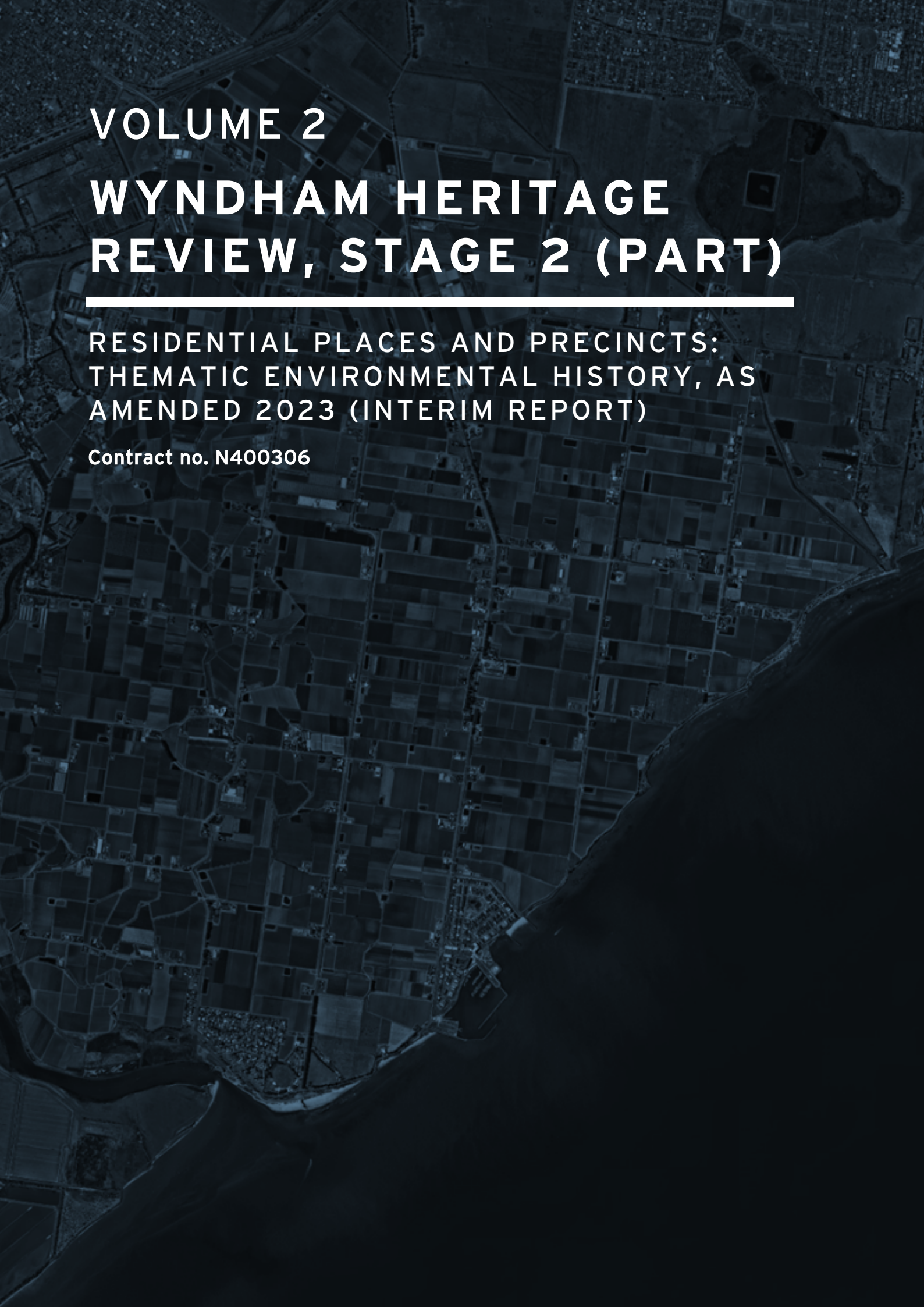

WYNDHAM HERITAGE REVIEW, STAGE 2 (PART)

THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

15 September 2023

Prepared for

CITY OF WYNDHAM

Prepared by

LOVELL CHEN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Wyndham is located on the lands of the Wadawurrung and Bunurong peoples, who are, and have always been the custodians of this land. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This report was prepared on the lands of the Wurundjeri people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that this report includes a post-contact history that forms only a small part of the ongoing story.

Quality Assurance Register

The following quality assurance register documents the development and issue of this report prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd in accordance with our quality management system.

Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
10055	1	Draft for Council review	14/08/23	LB
10055	2	Final draft	05/09/23	LB
10055	3	Interim report	15/09/23	LB

Referencing

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01 INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This Thematic Environmental History was commissioned by Wyndham City Council in September 2020 as part of the Wyndham Heritage Review Stage 1 ('the Stage 1 study'). The need for an updated Thematic Environmental History was identified as part of the Stage 1 study, the broader purpose of which is to identify and document post-contact places and precincts of potential heritage significance across the City of Wyndham area.

The draft report has been updated by Lovell Chen, as part of Stage 2 of the Wyndham Heritage Review. Stage 2 of the study involves the detailed assessment of residential places and precincts of potential heritage significance identified in Stage 1 The further research and stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of Stage 2 has informed the updates to this thematic environmental history. Project background and brief

The scope of the project includes researching and writing a thematic environmental history of the City of Wyndham, that outlines the historical development of the area from European settlement through to the present day.

This volume builds on previous heritage reports prepared for the City of Wyndham, primarily 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham', prepared by Context with Carlotta Kellaway for the City of Wyndham in 1997.

The development of the Thematic Environmental History is intended to be an initial step in a strategic process to review the post-contact heritage of the municipality, ensuring that the land use and settlement patterns of the area are captured and set within a broad thematic framework, which can be used to better compare, understand and substantiate the heritage values of individual places, areas and themes within the area.

This report includes some background on the rich Aboriginal heritage of Wyndham and the wider area, but this is limited as a full investigation into this subject was not possible. Consultation and review of this document by Traditional Owners is ongoing as part of this heritage review.

Section 2 discusses in more details the approach and methodology for developing the Thematic Environmental History.

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1.2 Study area

The study area is the municipal area of the City of Wyndham, as shown below:

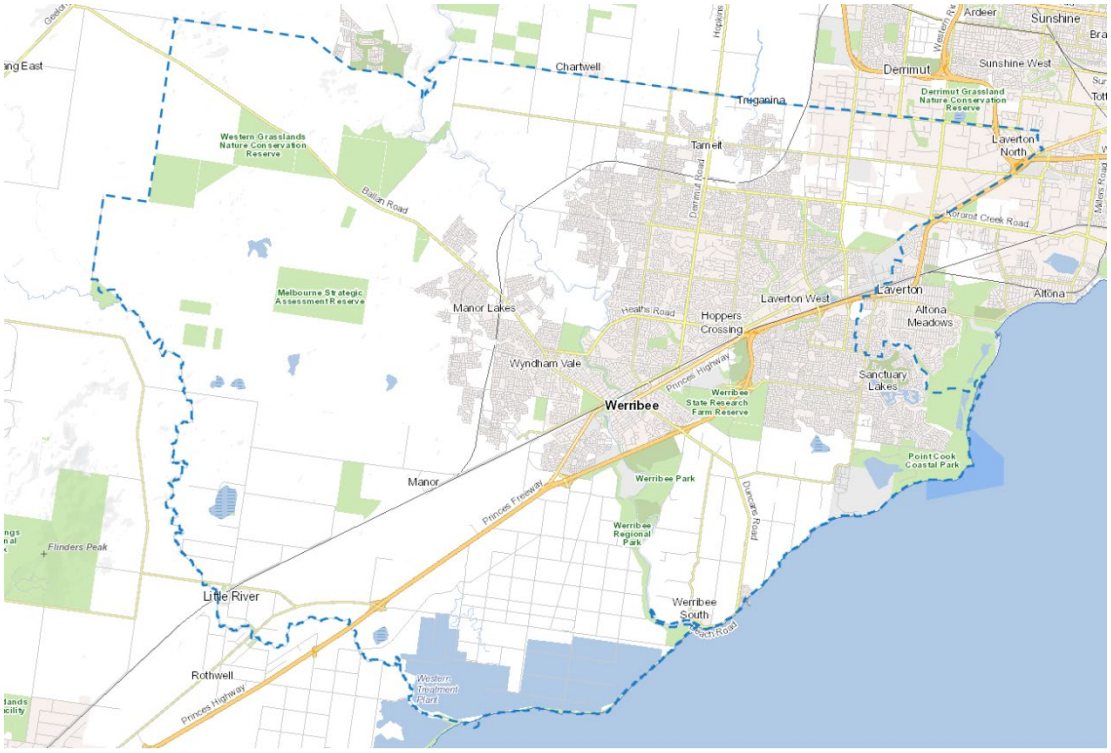

Figure 1 Map of the City of Wyndham with blue dashed line showing municipal boundaries. Source: VicPlan

Note that the locality of Little River is divided at the municipal boundary between the City of Wyndham and the City of Geelong.

1.3 Project team

The draft report was prepared by Dr Helen Doyle, with support provided by Jessica Antolino and Jon Griffiths of Context. The updated Stage 2 report was prepared by Libby Blamey of Lovell Chen, with input from Biosis and Wyndham City Council. The report has been reviewed by Kristien van den Bossche, Dr Heather Threadgold and Felicity Watson of Wyndham City Council.

1.4 Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the assistance of the following organisations and individuals:

Kristien Van Den Bossche, Felicity Watson, Dr Heather Threadgold, Jack Willett, Heritage Unit, City of Wyndham

Rosemary Harrigan, Werribee District Historical Society

Gordon Hope, Werribee District Historical Society

Frances Overmars, Werribee District Historical Society

Lance Pritchard, Werribee District Historical Society

Les Sanderson, Little River Historical Society

Peter and Sue Jones, Little River Mechanics Institute and Free Library Inc.

Gary Vines, Kacey Sinclair and Erica Walther, Biosis Pty Ltd

Joe Agius, Campbells Cove boatsheds representative

1.5 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this report:

ARP	Air Raid Precautions
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific Industrial and Research Organisation
MMBW	Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works
HCV	Housing Commission of Victoria
PROV	Public Records Office of Victoria
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RHSV	Royal Historical Society of Victoria
RSL	Returned Services League
SLV	State Library Victoria
SRWSC	State Rivers and Water Supply Commission
VGG	Victorian Government Gazette
VMD	Victorian Municipal Directory
VHR	Victorian Heritage Register
VPRS	Victorian Public Record Series
WDHS	Werribee District Historical Society

1.6 Limitations

The development of the Thematic Environmental History has relied on general historical sources and fragmentary references to Aboriginal people in the study area that have drawn from contemporary accounts. Engagement with Traditional Owner organisations is ongoing, however they have not reviewed or endorsed this work.

Restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, which were implemented during the course of the study, meant that in-person meetings with local historical societies and other groups could not go ahead in Stage 1. Consultation was undertaken as part of Stage 2. Research for this document has primarily relied on published and digitised sources.

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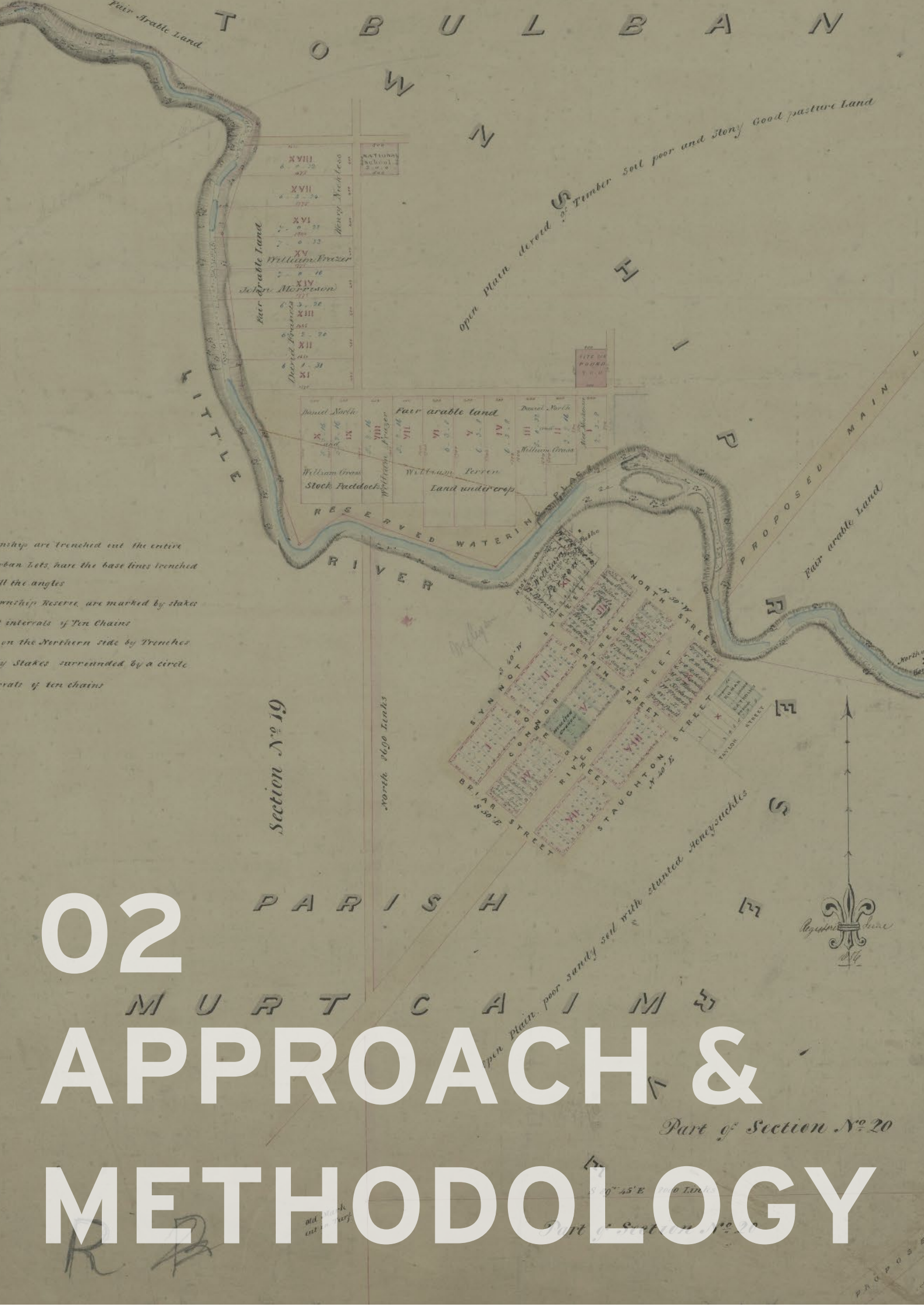

02 APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

2.0 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This draft Thematic Environmental History of the City of Wyndham brings together the various strands of the history of the municipality around a series of historical themes. The history covers the period of settlement from the 1830s onwards with recognition and acknowledgement of Traditional Owner cultural attributes, values and cultural heritage pre-settlement and continuing.

No previous Thematic Environmental History of the area of City of Wyndham has been prepared. A framework of historical themes was developed for the City of Wyndham in 1997 (Context, 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham), but a Thematic Environmental History was not developed at that time. An earlier history of the (former) Shire of Werribee by historian Andrew May was prepared for the Ministry for Planning and Environment in 1989, which was based around historical themes.

2.1.1 Stage 1 draft

The approach to developing a draft Thematic Environmental History for Wyndham involved the following key tasks:

- Review of the thematic framework developed for Wyndham in 1997 =
- Further review of sources of historical information relevant to the City of Wyndham, including the review of recent historical literature since the 1997 study was prepared, and compilation of a bibliography for the Thematic Environmental History;
- Detailed historical research, covering a range of sources, including primary and secondary historical resources; historical maps, plans and images, and other reports and information sourced from local groups and selected stakeholders;
- Refinement of the draft Key Historical Themes (post-contact period) for the City of Wyndham that were identified in the preliminary Stage 1 study report; and
- Consultation with knowledgeable members of the local community.

2.1.2 Stage 2 draft

Stage 2 of the Wyndham Heritage Review has primarily focused on the assessment and analysis of residential places and precincts in the municipality. The updates to the draft Thematic Environmental History as part of Stage 2 have comprised the following tasks:

- Review of existing draft and minor edits for clarity and tone, or additional information where further detail was appropriate;
- Minor amendments to some theme sub-headings;
- Consultation with Werribee District Historical Society and Little River Historical Society, following their reviews of the draft Stage 1 document. Feedback was incorporated as relevant;
- Updates of relevant sections to incorporate further historical research undertaken as part of the assessment of places and precincts for the Stage 2 assessments; and
- Updates to images used throughout the document where better or more appropriate versions were available;

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- Amended and expanded sections relating to Traditional Owners, including the 'Aboriginal Country' theme;
- Consultation with Traditional Owners is ongoing.

The updates to the history as part of this stage has not comprised a major restructure of the themes; the work has aimed to augment the existing document. Examples of places which are related to each theme have also been added to the document. These include heritage places which have been included or recommended for inclusion in the heritage overlay, and places which may not be of heritage significance, but which have a connection to a historical theme.

2.1.3 What is a Thematic Environmental History?

The purpose of a thematic history is to bring the stories of particular aspects of the history of the municipality, to provide a stronger local context for these themes, and thus highlight the particular ways that an area has developed and changed. In providing a detailed and up-to-date account of the themes or strands of history in particular locality, a Thematic Environmental History serves as an important planning tool in the assessment of potential places of potential heritage significance.

2.1.4 Using historical themes in heritage practice

A thematic framework is a standard tool used in current heritage practice (relating not only to forms of built heritage but to many different place types), which is used to categorise, contextualise, compare and assess all kinds of heritage places. The framework prepared for this report (which was devised following the review and updating of the Wyndham historical themes prepared in 1997) was modelled on the document *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* (hereafter VFHT), which was developed for Heritage Victoria in 2011. Section 2.2 below discusses the review of the 1997 thematic framework in more detail.

2.2 Thematic framework

A draft Framework of Historical Themes was developed as part of the Stage 1 Wyndham Gap Study in June 2020. This formed the basis of the structure of the Thematic Environmental History but has been reshaped as a result of targeted research that has been carried out since then. This framework, shown below in Table 1, is based on 'Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes' (Heritage Victoria, 2011).

While 'Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes' (VFHT), prepared in 2011, is comprehensive, it is intended as a guide only. Different municipalities with different historical stories may have a slightly different approach to their historical themes. The understanding of historical themes will also change with time so that the understanding of history and historical themes in a particular place will inevitably change over time.

The draft Historical Themes for Wyndham (14 themes) prepared for this report differs from the Victorian Historical Themes (9 themes) in the following ways:

Aboriginal Country	This has been made a stand-alone theme for Wyndham because it is fundamental to the history of the area. Whilst this theme is covered in part in the VFHT 1.0 'Shaping Victoria's Environment' and partly covered by VFHT 2.0 'Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes', VFHT 3.0 'Claiming and occupying the land' and VFHT 5.0 'Living off the land and sea', it is important to recognise that there was a rich history in Wyndham before the arrival of Europeans from the 1830s, and that this culture and

	connection to Country continues. Wyndham was also an important place in the earliest European settlement of Melbourne.
Advancing scientific knowledge and agricultural research	This theme has been made a stand-alone theme for Wyndham on account of the rich history in Wyndham centred around the State Research Farm and other institutions that have contributed to scientific knowledge.
Defence and military	This has been made a stand-alone theme for Wyndham because of its strong representation in the area and its importance to the local economy and culture in terms of visibility and employment.
Water supply, sewerage and irrigation	This theme has been made a stand-alone theme for Wyndham on account of the important role that the sewerage farm, irrigation and water supply have played in its history

A framework of 14 key historical themes and a number of sub-themes has been developed, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Draft thematic framework for the City of Wyndham. (Note that the examples of place types are representative only and serve as a guide for the types of places that might be considered under each theme.)

1	**Aboriginal Country**	
1.1	Living as Victoria's First People	Cultural values Cultural heritage Cultural landscapes Cultural waters Landforms and viewsheds Time and continuing cultures
2	**Shaping the environment**	
2.1	Natural environments	nature reserves
2.2	Appreciating and preserving the natural environment	coastal reserves river-side reserves, water, fire fencing, timber
2.4	Transforming the land and waterways	remnant vegetation (cultural and natural values) wetland reserves
3	**Claiming and occupying the land**	
3.1	Exploration and survey	early tracks and camps of explorers and settlers
3.2	Pastoral settlement	Aboriginal camp sites
3.3	Buildings and structures	surveyor's markers
3.4	Impact of settlement: dispossession and frontier conflict	crossing points early settlement sites
3.5	Agricultural settlement	conflict sites pastoral homes and gardens

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		drystone walls
		homesteads
		mansions
4	**Building connections through transport and communications**	
4.1	Establishing early tracks and travel routes	explorers' routes
4.2	Building roads and bridges	early settlers' tracks
4.3	Travelling by water	road bridges
4.4	Developing rail networks	blacksmiths' shops
4.5	Postal and telegraph services	jetties and ports
4.6	Newspapers	railway stations
		goods sheds
		sites of former sidings and goods sheds
		railway bridges
		aviation sites and hangars
		post offices
		telephone exchanges
5	**Living off the land and sea**	
5.1	Sheep and cattle	pastoral homesteads
5.2	Grain growing	woolsheds
]		farms and farm buildings
5.3	Dairying	farmers' commons
5.4	Poultry	dairy buildings and cool rooms
5.5	Market gardening and orchards	market garden sheds
5.6	Fishing and trapping	stockyards
5.7	Horse-breeding	
6	**Infrastructure and services**	
6.1	Establishing local water supplies	water supply systems (wells and pumps)
6.2	Providing essential services	water tanks
6.3	Building irrigation schemes	water towers
6.4	Building and operating a metropolitan sewerage scheme	sewerage system infrastructure
		irrigation channels and associated infrastructure
		drainage works
7	**Building industries and employment**	
7.1	Processing raw materials	quarries and mines
7.2	Extractive industries	factories and other industrial buildings
7.3	Manufacturing	industrial plants

7.4	Food processing and chemical manufacturing	sheds laboratories staff facilities
7.5	Women's work	
7.6	Changing nature of work and unemployment	
8	**Building towns and cities**	
8.1	Developing towns	subdivision patterns
8.2	Providing goods and services	public buildings
8.3	Housing the population	shops
8.4	Planting trees and cultivating gardens	banks
8.5	Expanding metropolitan Melbourne and making new suburbs	public parks and gardens street trees housing estates commercial stables
9	**Governing and keeping order**	
9.1	Local government	court houses
9.2	Maintaining law and order	police stations
9.3	Fighting for political rights	police paddocks lock-ups municipal offices (shire halls) State government offices drainage
10	**Servicing the community**	
10.1	Social life	public halls and mechanics institutes
10.2	Providing education	schools
10.3	Establishing places of worship	pre-schools and kindergartens
10.4	Community buildings	churches and church halls
10.5	Hospitals and public health	social clubs and service clubs
10.6	Community organisations and service clubs	community centres
10.7	Immigrant communities	hospitals infant welfare centres cemeteries
11	**Military and defence**	
11.1	Establishing a military tradition	military training and parade grounds
11.2	Military aviation	military barracks
12.3	Italian prisoners-of-war	Bristol huts
11.4	War memorials	defence sites

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		military aircraft hangars
		war memorials
		air raid shelters and air raid halls
		cannon
12	**Advancing scientific knowledge and agricultural research**	
12.1	Promoting scientific knowledge	fossil sites
12.2	Developing agricultural research	field trial sites
12.3	Veterinary science and zoology	research institutes
		zoos
		agricultural showgrounds
13	**Sport and recreation**	
13.1	Horse-racing and coursing	sports grounds
13.2	Reserves and sports grounds	recreation reserves
13.3	Football and cricket	public parks and gardens
13.4	Tennis, bowls, croquet and golf	bowling clubs
13.5	Boating and fishing	tennis clubs
13.6	Swimming	croquet clubs
13.7	Cycling and motor sports	swimming pools and swimming places
		foreshore reserves
		jetties
		golf courses
14	**Shaping cultural and creative life**	
14.1	Nurturing and celebrating the arts	cultural centres
14.2	Celebrating culture	art galleries and studios
14.3	Popular culture: film, television, radio	theatres and cinemas
14.4	Appreciating history and heritage	tourist attractions
14.5	Monuments and memorials	monuments and memorials
14.6	Tourism	film sets

2.3 Developing the Thematic Environmental History

The Thematic Environmental History draws on a wide range of sources, including documentary and online sources. It also draws on input from some of the local history experts in the City of Wyndham; we have endeavoured to represent the suggestions of local experts about what is important about the City of Wyndham's history and heritage.

The thematic history does not include a detailed account of the Aboriginal history of the area, however, the thematic history does incorporate some of the documented aspects of Aboriginal history and acknowledged continued culture of Wadawurrung and Bunurong peoples. Consultation is being undertaken with Traditional Owner organisations.

2.4 Timeline of development in the City of Wyndham

	VICTORIAN EVENTS	LOCAL EVENTS (WYNDHAM)
60,000-100,000 BP+	Human occupation of Port Phillip area	2,000 generations of Wadawurrung and Bunurong and ongoing connection to Country in Wyndham
1802	British navigation of southern Australia	Matthew Flinders ascends 'Station Peak' (You Yangs) (outside the study area)
1803	British convict settlement at Sullivans Cove (Sorrento)	Convict William Buckley escapes from Sullivans Cove and lives with Wadawurrung people for over thirty years
1824		Charles Grimes explores Port Phillip and camps at Hovells Creek which is nearby (outside the study area) Explorers Hume and Hovell pass through the area
1835	Members of the Port Phillip Association land at Indented Head; take up land at Port Phillips	Werribee area included in large area known as the Iramoo Plains; members of the Port Phillip Association take up land for pastoralism
1836	The Port Phillip District of the Colony of NSW is declared and Melbourne is officially settled	Settlers seek to avenge the death of Charles Franks and his convict servant Thomas Flinders at Mount Cottrell by killing a number of Aboriginal people
1836-37		First hotel established on the route to Geelong
1840s		Early pastoralists in the area include John Helder Wedge, William John Clarke and William Cross Yuille

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	VICTORIAN EVENTS	LOCAL EVENTS (WYNDHAM)
1847	Pre-emptive rights granted to pastoral licensees	Country around Werribee is claimed as freehold by squatters
1849		Thomas Chirnside settles at Point Cook.
1849		Survey of the village of Wyndham (now Werribee)
1850s		Land sales in the local area Several bluestone quarries established Bluestone road bridges constructed Departure of workers for the gold rushes First schools operating
1851	Colony of Victoria established Gold is discovered in Victoria Black Thursday bushfires	Survey of the village of Rothwell on the Little River
1857	Railway opened from Melbourne to Newport (extended to Geelong in 1860)	Point Cook homestead is built
1860s	Selection acts encourage small farming	Towns and villages established Consolidation of pastoral holdings Geodetic Survey of Vicotria established
1861		Werribee National School established
1862	*Land Act* (Vic.)	Wyndham Road District established
1864		Shire of Wyndham proclaimed
1871	Severe drought in Victoria	
1874		Werribee Park mansion erected by the Chirnside family
1880s	Land boom period	
1884	Royal Commission on Irrigation, chaired by Alfred Deakin	Town of Werribee declared
1886	*Irrigation Act* (Vic.)	
1888		Werribee Irrigation Scheme (and tenant farming) established by the Chaffey Brothers Tenant farming commenced at Werribee Park

	VICTORIAN EVENTS	LOCAL EVENTS (WYNDHAM)
1890s	Economic depression	
1891	Establishment of the MMBW	
1892		Metropolitan Farm established by the MMBW Two state schools established for MMBW workers, with a total of four established
1901	Federation of the Australian colonies	
1904	*Closer Settlement Act* (Vic.)	
1905	Passing of *Water Act* and creation of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWSC)	Werribee Irrigation District gazetted
1906		Closer settlement scheme in Werribee
1909		Shire of Wyndham renamed Shire of Werribee Werribee Diversion Weir constructed
1910		Point Cook air base established
1912		State Research Farm established at Werribee
1914-18	First World War	
1917	*Discharged Soldier Settlement Act* (Vic.)	Soldier settlement schemes in area Werribee Irrigation and Water Supply District was proclaimed by the SRWSC
1920s	Suburban growth in Melbourne	Residential development in Werribee
1920	Royal Australian Air Force established	
1921	New federal tariff stimulates local industry	
1923		Jesuits establish Corpus Christi Seminary at Werribee Park
1925		Locality of Werribee South declared
1929	Onset of the Great Depression	Use of sustenance workers for construction of concrete irrigation channels in Werribee South

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	VICTORIAN EVENTS	LOCAL EVENTS (WYNDHAM)
1938		Construction of water storage system at Cobbledicks Ford, Werribee, allowing for expansion of irrigation system
1939-45	Second World War	RAAF Base operational
1940s	Expansion of manufacturing in outskirts of Melbourne	Women's Land Army active in the area New research institute – CSIRO
1945+	Beginning of large-scale postwar immigration to Victoria	
1950s	Child farm labour from Britain sent to Victoria	Melbourne University Vet Science hospital established
1954	Increased ownership of the motor car	Expansion of market gardening around Werribee
1956	Melbourne Planning Scheme	Housing Commission of Victoria proposes housing in Werribee
1961-62		Housing Commission estates established at Werribee, beginning with the Devon Park estate
1969		Bushfires between Lara and the outskirts of Melbourne have a widespread impact in the municipality
1960s-70s		Ongoing residential development in Werribee; development of Hoppers Crossing
1972		Victorian Government acquires Werribee Park
1970s		Werribee Open Range Zoo established
1978		West Gate Bridge completed
1980s		Suburb of Wyndham Vale established
1987		City of Werribee declared
1995		Wyndham City Council formed
c. 2000s		Point Cook residential area developed
c. 2002		Western Ring Road completed

2.5 Overview thematic history

The City of Wyndham occupies the Traditional Countries of the Bunurong and Wadawurrung of the Kulin Nation. Sited at the edge of the Victorian Volcanic Plains, one of the largest volcanic plains in the world, the City of Wyndham lies in the shadow of the You Yangs to the west and is bordered by the coastal waters of Port Phillip Bay to the south. It contains the largest area of natural temperate grassland remaining in Victoria, and is characterised by undulating, stony country with low-lying land and lagoons along its coastal edge. It is watered by the Werribee River (Werribee Yalook), the Little River and various minor (and seasonal) freshwater tributaries. It is situated in close proximity to the western region of Melbourne.

Known as Werribee, after the river of the same name (Werribee Yalook), which is a border and boundary of the Bunurong and Wadawurrung Countries, this area was the site of early exploration and contact. When settlers arrived, they found vast grassy plains that were lightly timbered – ideal pastoral country. It was important as an area of early pastoral and agricultural settlement, which saw the emergence of small townships. Surviving built fabric from this period includes the dry-stone walls along roadways and between properties, which are characteristic of the area. The municipality is situated between Melbourne and Geelong, and early road and rail routes between the growing cities also traverse the region. Both the Little River and Werribee townships are located at important river crossings, providing services to early travellers and settlers. Other rural localities included Truganina and Tarneit, which comprised small populations supporting a small number of churches, halls and schools.

Little River, established as Rothwell in 1852, developed at its present site as a result of the opening of the Melbourne-Geelong Railway Line, and the associated Little River Railway Station of 1864. It retained a small population through the nineteenth century and twentieth century, but extant churches, mechanics hall, a school and recreational facilities, along with early twentieth century residential development, are evidence of the township's longstanding community.

Werribee is significant as a nineteenth-century country town, which retains its original village layout of 1849, and remnant nineteenth-century buildings, reservations and tree plantings, associated with its early development. The river, which bisects the town, is an important natural feature, and its banks are the site of numerous parks and reserves both in Werribee, and in the broader municipality. The town of Werribee experienced limited development in the nineteenth century, with much of the surrounding land controlled by the Chirnside family and other pastoralists. The vast Werribee Park estate is evidence of the Chirnsides' local dominance.

Significant growth took place in the Werribee district from the 1890s and the early twentieth century — a result of the government's encouragement to settlement through closer settlement and soldier settlement, and general prosperity. Subdivisions of Crown allotments adjacent to the township in the early twentieth century also encouraged residential development.

Tenant farming, irrigation schemes and closer settlement from the late 1880s onwards brought greater prosperity to the area, through improved methods of dairying and cropping. There were further farming developments after 1915 with an expanded irrigation scheme in Werribee South that attracted returned servicemen and, later, a large number of southern European immigrants who developed a successful market garden industry. The construction and management of the irrigation scheme infrastructure through the twentieth century transformed the landscape of Werribee South into a productive agricultural and market farming region, which continues to this day. The legacy of ex-servicemen and Southern European migrant farming families in Werribee South is evident in the extant twentieth

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century residences, public buildings and irrigation infrastructure, along with the tight-knit resident community. The boatsheds of the nearby Campbell's Cove and Bailey's Beach also demonstrate the importance of post-war migration to the municipality. The wealth of the Chirnsides' Werribee Park has left a rich legacy in the buildings and grounds of the estate itself. The enormous size of the estate dominated the local area for several decades, and, later, also enabled large-scale developments such as a tenant farming scheme, the Metropolitan Sewage Farm, an irrigation scheme, Corpus Christi College, and more recently the Werribee Open Range Zoo. Other historical uses of the estate, such as for hunting and voluntary military activities, also relied on its size and its proximity to Melbourne.

The large areas of relatively flat land, and direct links to the city, have meant that the municipal area of Wyndham has been suitable for significant public projects, including the Metropolitan Sewage Farm (1890s), the State Research Farm (1912) and the RAAF Airbase (c. 1917). These operations had large workforces which attracted people to the area.

Residential development in the municipality increased in the early twentieth century but grew significantly from the 1920s as large areas were subdivided for housing. The interwar period saw suburban development to the north and south of Werribee township, which continued into the post-war period. Many streets in Werribee comprise a mix of housing styles from the early twentieth century to the present. As was the case across much of Melbourne, and other country areas, this residential development was aided by the State Savings Bank and the Housing Commission of Victoria, which established a number of estates in the municipality in the 1950s and 1960s. New housing was also developed for the local employees of many of the large workplaces, such as the residences constructed for workers of the Carter Egg Farm, along with the township of Cocoroc (now mostly demolished) for the Metropolitan Farm staff. In the postwar period, the area attracted significant numbers of immigrants from Europe. Subsequent waves of migrants have since arrived from the Middle East and Asia.

Identified as a 'metropolitan growth area' in 1971, Wyndham has been and continues to be one of the fastest growing areas of outer Melbourne. Localities such as Hoppers Crossing grew to well-populated suburbs in the late twentieth century, followed by more recent housing development in Wyndham Vale, Manor Lakes, Truganina and Tarneit. This growth has seen a shift in the 'country identity' of the municipality, with remnant nineteenth century buildings now surrounded by more recent housing.

Important themes in the history of the City of Wyndham include the continuing connection of its Traditional Owners, the evidence of nineteenth century pastoral occupation and later small-scale farming and market gardening, and its remnant country towns and evidence of their growth through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Places which contribute to an understanding of the history of the municipality include community buildings, residential buildings and recreation reserves, roads and railway routes and large and small-scale infrastructure. The various communities which have resided in Wyndham have contributed to its development, continue to leave their mark today.

03 HISTORY

3.0 THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF WYNDHAM

The City of Wyndham occupies the eastern edge of the Victorian Volcanic Plains, demarcated by several north–south flowing watercourses: the Werribee River (Werribee Yalook) and Little River to the west, and the Skeleton Creek and Kororoit Creek to the east. Today, Wyndham also marks the edge of the ever-widening sphere of metropolitan Melbourne, but through the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth, Werribee and surrounds was a farming region close to Melbourne, and a ready supplier of produce with close access to Melbourne markets. Though it both relied on, and served the needs of, the city, Werribee remained separate from it. A 'piece of the country' close to the city — an ideal that was promoted in advertising material for new homes in Werribee in the 1980s. For the smaller towns and settlements — including Tarneit, Truganina and Point Cook — a *rural* identity persisted for much longer, but the residential transformation of farming land over the last ten to fifteen years has significantly changed much of the area. In contrast, Little River, further to the west, remains a country town and retains many of its small-scale buildings and range of commercial and community buildings.

The dramatic changes wrought by colonisation from the late-1830s were catastrophic to the Aboriginal people of the area:, the Bunurong and the Wadawurrung. Yet for the first decade of British settlement at Port Phillip much about the form and character of the landscape essentially remained unchanged. The Werribee River and Little River snaked their courses across a wide expanse of flat grasslands. Settlement was sparse and scattered, fencing was minimal, and the early emerging towns centres were small and undeveloped. While there were efforts in the mid-nineteenth century to develop farming, with efforts made at cropping and vegetable growing, the area was overwhelmingly pastoral. This changed by the latter part of the nineteenth century. Towns had developed slowly through the 1870s and into the 1880s, but saw increased activity from the late 1880s with the introduction of tenant farming from the late 1880s, the establishment of the Metropolitan Farm in the early 1890s, and closer settlement schemes in the early 1900s. These changes brought significant change to the social demographics of the area. The local economy ebbed and flowed with the broader booms and downturns in Victoria. The broader problem of decline in the countryside in the 1890s and early 1900s was not perhaps felt as strongly, or as widely, in the Werribee district owing to significant local developments like the building of the Metropolitan Farm and the Main Outflow Sewer, and the successful closer settlement schemes. As metropolitan Melbourne expanded in the mid twentieth century, the extensive plains to the west provided available land for residential development. The area slowly saw former farming land replaced with new housing developments, a pattern that has continued up to the present time.

For around seventy years, the Werribee Plains were dominated by the wealthy Chirnside family, and other key settlers, whose expansive holdings were later acquired for other purposes, including Melbourne's sewerage treatment works, the State Research Farm, a Catholic seminary, and the Werribee Open Plains Zoo. In addition to their mansion Werribee Park, the dynamics of one dominant family in a rural area has left various other legacies, not least of which is the continuing operation of many of the institutions established on the Chirnside estate.

4.0 ABORIGINAL COUNTRY

Places related to this theme include:

- Victorian Volcanic Plains
- Werribee Yalook (Werribee River)
- Coastline of Port Phillip Bay
- Parish names of the municipality, including Bulban, Cocoroc, Deutgam, Mambourin, Mouyang, and Murtcaim

4.1 Living as Victoria's First People

[This section of the records relies on general historical sources and fragmentary references to Aboriginal people in the study area that have drawn from historical and contemporary accounts. Traditional Owner organisations have been consulted with for this project and are in the process of reviewing this work.]

The Werribee region has been Aboriginal Country for many thousands of generations. The Werribee River (Werribee Yalook) provides a boundary for Wadawurrung and Bunurong Traditional Owners. The west side of the Werribee River is Wadawurrung Country which extends to the west to Skipton, north to Ballarat and south to Aireys Inlet. The east side of the river is Bunurong Country, which extends to the Mornington Peninsula and the Bass Coast. These two groups represent three different language groups which belong to the larger Kulin nation, which is a confederacy of five language groups, which share a degree of language and culture.

Cultural Values

Bunurong and Wadawurrung people continually care for Country and that includes land, water, sky and everything in between. All resources such as plants, animals, stone, shellfish, birds, reptiles and fish are utilised for food, shelter, cultural practices, clothing, tools, medicine and teaching.

Cultural Heritage

Over fifty percent of the City of Wyndham is included in Areas of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006. However, cultural heritage exists everywhere. This highlights the significance of the natural landscapes and waterways in the region. Cultural heritage exists in the form of tangible and intangible evidence and knowledge.

Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes are diverse and include an abundance of natural resources utilising the Werribee Plains, rivers, coastal and stony rises.[1]

Cultural Waters

Cultural waters represent cultural attributes for Traditional Owners. As with other coastal areas of Victoria's Victorian Volcanic Plains, the coastal area is naturally punctuated with salty lagoons that attracted diverse birdlife, and fresh water springs and waterholes. As well as permanent streams, there

1 Victorian State Government Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 'Cultural Landscapes Strategy', 2021, https://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/futureforests/what-were-doing/victorian-cultural-landscapes-strategy, accessed 14 September 2023.

were also impermanent waterholes or chains of ponds, like the Skeleton Creek east of the Werribee River, which, like the coastal lagoons, were also salty.

Landforms and viewsheds

The You Yangs, although outside of the City of Wyndham, dominate the otherwise flat landscape, rising to 319 metres above sea level. Named from the Aboriginal Wurdi-Youang, or Youang, meaning 'big hill', these granite hills are an important cultural site for the Wauthaurung [Wadawurrung] and are also significant in Aboriginal astronomy.[2] J.H. Wedge, a member of the Port Phillip Association, recorded the name 'Yun Yangs' in 1836.[3] As the highest point in the surrounding area, the You Yangs would also have also been a critical vantage point.

Time and continuing culture

Bunurong and Wadawurrung people have endured major geological changes over time from the glacial period, to witnessing volcanic eruption and lava flows that have shaped the landscape and inland waterways we now know. The rising sea levels changed the former landscape of Port Phillip from a kangaroo hunting ground and extension to Tasmania to Port Phillip Bay which occurred over time around 7000-18000 years ago. Creation stories told by oral history detail time, landforms, place and people and are embedded in cultural lore and law.

Bunurong and Wadawurrung are a continuing culture.

Place names

Aboriginal placenames, such as Werribee (Weariby) and You Yangs, and in the parish names, Bulban, Cocoroc, Deutgam, Mambourin, Mouyang, and Murtcaim. Whereas new counties in the Port Phillip District were generally given British names — for example, Bourke and Grant — it was the policy of Surveyor-General Robert Hoddle to adopt Aboriginal names for parish names wherever possible and this involved assistant surveyors attempting to determine from local Aboriginal people the names of any local feature in a locality.[4] Truganina, the name of a parish, was not a local placename but named after the Palawa Nuenonne woman Truganini (or Trugernanner). She had survived the Black War in Tasmania and came to Melbourne in 1838 with the appointed Chief Protector of Port Phillip, George Augustus Robinson. She returned to Tasmania in 1840 and died in Hobart in 1876. It is not known whether she had any particular association with the Werribee area.[5]

Another placename with a possible Aboriginal association was 'Bungey's Hole' — a deep swimming hole adjacent to the Werribee River, which was associated with the bunyip — a mysterious creature known to many Aboriginal people in different parts of Victoria. In an early plan of James Austin's pastoral run, dated 1845, the site on the river is marked as 'Budgel carnies Hole, A famed resort of the "Bunyip"' (see Figure 3).[6] The bunyip was a creature to be feared and often was associated with taking people into a

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2 Dolce Evers and Ian D. Clark 2014, 'The You Yangs Regional Park' in Ian D. Clark (ed.), *An Historical Geography of Tourism in Victoria, Australia*; 'Native Names', *Ballarat Star*, 8 June 1866, p. 2 (J.L. Currie was advised by a Wadawurrung informant of the name *Youang* for Station Peak, meaning 'big hill'); Whitworth 1879, p. 517.

3 K N James 1985, *Werribee: The first one hundred years*, Werribee District Historical Society, Werribee, p. 9.

4 Michael Cannon (ed.) 1984, *Historical Records of Victoria: Vol. 3: The Early Development of Melbourne 1836–1839*, p. 103.

5 Cassandra Pybus 2019, *Truganini*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest (NSW).

6 Black Forest Pastoral Run, 1845, VPRS 8168/ P5, item RUN, record 476 (Public Record Office Victoria).

waterhole a deep lake. According to the Assistant Protector of Aborigines at Port Phillip, William Thomas, the name 'Bungen karney' meant 'ugly, frightful, monster, devil, imaginary animal between man and bear'.[7]

Figure 2 Robert Russell, 'Bed of Werriby River from the Plains', c. 1852.
Source: H141393, State Library Victoria

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7 Marguerita Stephenson (ed.) 2015, *The Journals of William Thomas*, vol. 4, VACL, Fitzroy, p. 151.

5.0 SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

Places related to this theme include:

- Mount Cottrell
- Little River waterway
- Western Treatment Plant bird sanctuary
- Western Grasslands Reserve
- Werribee System Diversion Weir (HO3)
- Remnant drystone walls, Little River (including HO130)

5.1 Natural environments

The landscapes and waterways of Wyndham are unique and diverse. The majority of the area known as the Werribee Plains formed the eastern extremity of the vast Victorian Volcanic Plains, which is one of the largest in the world. The basalt derived from ancient lava flows and overlaid an existing layer of older sedimentary rock. Much of the area naturally consisted of grasslands with minimal scattered tree cover, that was modified by fire by Aboriginal people for thousands of years. The largest waterway, the Werribee River (Werribee Yalook), had its source in the hills to the north and terminated at Port Phillip Bay. When sea levels were higher there had been a much wider estuary area near the outflow. A secondary stream, the Little River, is fed by the Anakie Creek to the north; It is narrow but has cut deeply through the basalt layers.

The City of Wyndham is shaped by volcanic eruptions and the landscape varies from stony rises, undulating areas and flat variation.

The vast grassy plains were formed by volcanic activity many thousands of years ago. They were a distinctive landscape. J T Gellibrand, who was a member of the Port Phillip Association, observed in 1836 that 'the land was quite flat and rather rocky'.[8] The granite hills of the You Yangs lie to the west and Mount Cottrell to the north, both outside the study area, are dominant features of the wider landscape, although outside the study area. Mount Mary, like Mount Cottrell, is a of volcanic origin.

There are many species of birds, mammals, fish and shellfish that inhabit the land and waterways. Early settlers described the locality in the early period of settlement — as a place with rich birdlife, plentiful fish and a range of animals. J.H. Wedge described the Werribee Plains as being home to emu and kangaroos, wild dogs.[9] Many of the birds and animals that British settlers encountered when they first arrived in this area are now also rare in the local context.

Giant mammals inhabited the Werribee plains thousands of years ago, including giant wombats and kangaroos. Bones of these prehistoric animals were found at the site of the Metropolitan Farm in the early 1890s when the area was being excavated as part of its development.[10]

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8 J.T. Gellibrand 1857, 'Mr Gellibrand's Memoranda of a Trip to Port Phillip', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*, vol. 3, 1857, p. 74.

9 Cited in Susan Priestley 1988, *Altona: A long view*, Hargreen Publishing in association with the City of Altona, p. 3.

10 G.B. Pritchard 1895, 'Note on the Occurrence of Fossil Bones at Werribee', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*, 1895, pp. 157-58; *Australian News for Home Readers*, 25 November 1864, p. 7.

Vegetation, such as acacia, manna gum and banksia, was scattered across the Werribee grassy plains and large River Red Gums sheltered the Werribee River and on its floodplain. Early settlers could distinguish the course of the river by the distinctive line of trees along its banks. To the west wide of the river just north of Werribee was an area known in the early settlement period as the 'Black Forest', suggesting a particularly dense timbered area (see Figure 3). These trees were possibly Blackwoods, which had a black-coloured trunk.

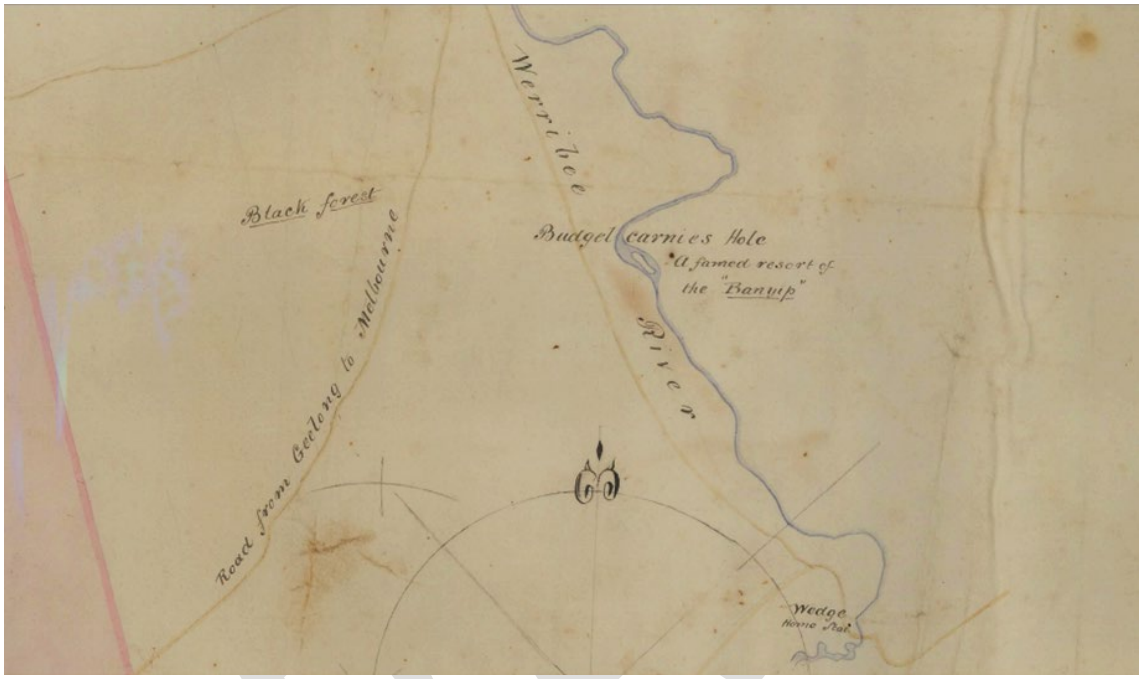

Figure 3 Plan of the site of James Austin's Black Forest station, dated 1845, showing the 'Black Forest', Wedge's home station, and 'Budgel carnies Hole'; detail from Pastoral Run plan 476.
Source: Historic Plan Collection, VPRS 8168, Public Record Office Victoria

5.2 Appreciating and preserving the natural environment

Early settlers in search of grazing land beheld the Werribee plains as fine pastoral country waiting to be stocked with sheep and cattle, and so appeared to them as a place of beauty and promise. The country was well watered by the Werribee River and numerous lagoons, and the river and its banks provided many local beauty spots. 'Rolf Boldrewood' (T.A. Browne), taking a mob of cattle westwards in 1844, stopped to camp at the Werribee. He recalled the view from the tent of 'the glorious, far-stretching wild' to the west:

> On three sides lay the plains, a dimly verdurous expanse … The outline of the Anakie–You Yangs range was sharply drawn against the dawn-lighted horizon, while far to the north east was seen the forest clothes summit of Mount Macedon, and westward gleaned the sea. The calm water of Corio Bay and the abrupt cone of

> Station Peak, nearly in the line of our route, formed an unmistakable yet picturesque landmark.[11]

Visitors found much to appreciate about the locality, particularly the Werribee River, as one fishing enthusiast explained: 'the Werribee has other attractions — the charming banks, lined alternately with high reeds that rustle like miniature bamboos, she-oaks climbing up the steep banks; and high thistles, illegally detained probably because they look so well'.[12] Many others saw the Werribee plains as a far from promising prospect. The visual sameness of the plains to European eyes, sparsely timbered and flat country, was often abhorred by those who passed through.

Little River's proximity to the You Yangs (Wurdi Youang) have meant that the township was a departure point for nature tourism. Although the site is outside the municipality, before the proliferation of car travel, the Little River railway station provided convenient access to the hills, which were, as described in 1879:

> To all lovers of truly wild nature and enjoyers of a good scramble [the You Yangs are] two miles from Little River Station … [The You Yangs site] is a favourite resort of picnic parties from Geelong, and occasionally Melbourne.

The *Illustrated Australian News* also noted the rocks were 'profusely scored' with marks and carved initials of these nineteenth century tourists.[13] However, a number of articles also observed that despite the relative easy access of the You Yangs from Melbourne, they appeared to be relatively unknown compared to more prominent tourist spots. Nevertheless, the You Yangs have been a prominent landmark in the western part of the municipality, with one correspondent to the *Werribee Shire Banner* writing in 1938:

> They are fascinating because they stand alone … These hills have beauty. Seen in some lights they are exquisite, and always they are attractive. Sometimes they are startling in their isolation.[14]

Steps to preserve the natural landscape were made by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) in 1921 when part of the Metropolitan Farm was set aside as a bird sanctuary; in 1938 the whole Farm was proclaimed a sanctuary for native game.[15] The area has attracted enormous numbers of migratory birds, and a wide variety of species. When the Metropolitan Farm was extended in the 1970s with additional lagoons, this attracted many species of water birds. Conservation became increasingly important to the Board in the 1960s and 1970s.[16] The Point Cook Marine Reserve on the coast was declared in 1982. Some land was reserved along the Werribee River for public purposes, but much has not been protected.

Other areas that are valued by the community as important to the natural environment include Truganina Cemetery which provides a habitat for the rare Button Wrinklewort daisies. The cemetery

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11 Rolf Boldrewood (T.A. Browne) 1969, *Old Melbourne Memories*, William Heinemann, Melbourne (first published 1884), p. 10.

12 James 1985, p. 55.

13 *Illustrated Australian News*, 22 January 1879, p. 10.

14 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 27 October 1938, p. 1.

15 Helen Penrose 2001, *Werribee Farm: A history*, Melbourne Water Corporation, Melbourne, p. 41.

16 Tony Dingle and Carolyn Rasmussen 1991, *Vital Connections*, p. 300.

trustees had prohibited grazing from the 1860s which allowed this species of wildflower to survive.[17] The You Yangs (outside the study area) has long been appreciated for its scenery and birdlife and has attracted bushwalkers and birdwatchers. The native grasslands of the area have been lost with the dramatic expansion of residential development. A new park at Tarneit, called Wootten Road Reserve, has recently been developed as a habitat for native grasslands of the area.

The importance of the region's grasslands has been recognised with the future Western Grasslands Reserve, which is being established by the Victorian Government, and includes land in the City of Wyndham. The reserve was created in 2010 and will ultimately form a new park connecting the You Yangs to the Werribee River and Little River. It aims to protect threatened native grasslands and 'endangered, dependent species', and includes environmental overlays and land acquisition.[18]

5.3 Transforming the land and waterways

From their arrival in 1835, settlers were confronted by various challenges in the natural environment. The pastoral invasion of the Werribee grasslands had dramatic implications for the land and waterways. It transformed the land and caused the waterways to become polluted and altered. It led to the disappearance of many of the native grasses and other plants used for food, such as Murnong or Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*), and other purposes, which were trampled by hoofed beasts.

5.3.1 Water

The Werribee River (Werribee Yalook, Figure 2) was naturally prone to flooding, which would often cause significant damage to settlers' buildings and property. Early residents witnessed firsthand the capabilities of the Werribee River, when the river broke its banks in 1852 and flooded with such devastating force that the timber homestead of Edward Wedge was washed away and several members of the family were drowned.[19] There were subsequent instances of damaging flooding of the Werribee River, for example in 1891, but none had the same gravitas as the dramatic loss of the members of the Wedge family in 1852. The damming of the river further upstream, for example, with the Melton Reservoir, has helped to mitigate the potential for flooding to some extent. In contrast to flooding, there have been periods of low rainfall and drought. When the river ran low, the shortage of water was detrimental to stock and hence to farming livelihoods.

Pastoral settlement caused the waterways to be monopolised by a few users rather than being accessible to a larger group of people. Much of the area within the City of Wyndham had been taken up in the Crown land sales of the mid-1850s, prior to a government order in the early 1860s for the protection and reservation of waterways and their frontages. As a result, many properties had unrestricted frontage to the Werribee River, Little River and the Skeleton Creek. Many of the waterways were depleted due to overuse and Little River residents have sought to remedy this.[20] In the Little River

17 DELWP 2019, 'A Halloween Tale: Melbourne cemetery pushing up rare daisies', https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/media-releases/cemetery-rare-daisies

18 'Victorian government ordered to pay property developers $92m compensation over fight for Western Grassland Reserve', ABC News, 17 July 2023, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-17/victorian-government-compensation-case-grassland-reserve/102606140, accessed 26 July 2023.; *pers. Comm*, Little River Historical Society and Kristien Van den Bossche, Wyndham City Council, 25 October 2022.

19 James 1985, p. 26.

20 Sue and Peter Jones, Little River, pers. comm., November 2020.

area, for example, the diversion of some headwaters as part of the construction of the Stony Creek Reservoir in the 1860s caused issues for local horticulturalists.[21] The waterways and lagoons were exploited by stock (with some used for sheepwashing), but some river frontage was reserved for various public purposes. Holes were dug to exploit the basalt.

Later, lagoons were drained and waterways were dammed (the Werribee River at Melton). The Skeleton Creek chain of waterholes was contained and altered. The network of irrigation channels in the Werribee area and the extensive operations that comprised the Metropolitan Sewage Farm transformed the landscape from the 1890s until the 1940s.

Widespread interventions into the landscape to encourage agriculture and other farming activities took place from the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, with the construction of irrigation channels in the eastern part of the municipality. The Chaffey Brothers' failed irrigation colony operated in the northwest of Werribee from 1888-1893. In 1910, the Werribee stock and domestic water supply channel was constructed, commencing approximately two kilometres from Werribee and extending generally north-east and east for approximately eight kilometres.[22] The development of irrigation channels in Werribee South (Figure 5) through the interwar period transformed the area into highly productive agricultural district, which continues to supply Victorian markets today. See Section 9.3 for further discussion.

Figure 4 Photograph by Fred Kruger showing a section of the Werribee River, c. 1882.
Source: Accession number: PH323-1979, National Gallery of Victoria

21 *pers. Comm*, Little River Historical Society and Kristien Van den Bossche, Wyndham City Council, 25 October 2022.

22 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 19 February 1910, p. 3.

Figure 5 Australian Imperial Section General Staff, 'Melbourne' 1933 (drawn from 1916 map). Army plan of the Werribee area, showing the regimented structure of the Metropolitan Farm laid over the flat landscape. The blue lines indicate irrigation channels.
Source: State Library of Victoria

5.3.2 Fire

Fire has also long been part of this landscape. Aboriginal people fired the grasslands using controlled burning to regenerate plant foods and to manage a fragile environment and to create wildlife habitats and feeding grounds. The Governor of New South Wales, Richard Bourke, noted that the Werribee Plains had the appearance of having recently been burnt when he passed through the area in 1836.[23] Others were struck by the absence of trees on the Werribee plains.[24] Fire was a dire problem for settlers during dry seasons and frequently caught them off-guard with fire-fighting strategies limited in the early days of settlement. Large-scale fires affected the area on Black Thursday 1851 and in the dry summers of 1967–68 and 1968–69. Many early buildings have been lost to fires, including 'The Manor', which burnt down in 1966, and the historic Truganina Hall which was lost in the 1969 fires. In 1969, grassfires lapped the edges of new housing development at Hoppers Crossing, while the You Yang fires in 1985 came to within 150 metres of the Little River Mechanics Hall.[25] Controlling large grassfires was difficult without a reliable local water supply, mechanised transport and co-ordinated local efforts.

5.3.3 Fencing

Pastoral settlers, and the farmers who came after them, built an extensive network of drystone walls across the Werribee plains, using the volcanic field stone that was lying around in profusion. This was

23 Michael Cannon (ed.) 1981, *Historical Records of Victoria: Vol. 1*, Victorian Government Printing Office, Melbourne, p. 101.

24 Michael Cannon (ed.) 1984, *Historical Records of Victoria: Vol. 3,* Victorian Government Printing Office, Melbourne, p. xx.

25 Little River Mechanics Hall website—History: https://littlerivermechanicshall.weebly.com/history.html, Hoppers Crossing', wyndhamhistory.net.au.

both to fence in the stock and to keep rabbits out. Some of the better-made walls were commenced below the ground surface to deter rabbits from digging.[26] The stone walls had an impact on the land, both visually and ecologically, and are appreciated as of historical value to the region.

5.3.4 Timber

Through the second half of the nineteenth century this remained a grazing and farming district with little concentrated settlement apart from the Werribee and Little River townships. Whilst there was little urban development up until the 1890s, the landscape was impacted by grazing and agricultural practices. The land was cleared of trees, although settlers found much of the area relatively thinly timbered, although River Red Gums could be found along waterways and a more densely timbered area known as the 'Black Forest' was located to the wets of the Werribee River.

26 Biosis 2015, 'Wyndham Dry Stone Walls Study', prepared for the City of Wyndham, p. 56.

6.0 CLAIMING AND OCCUPYING THE LAND

Places related to this theme include:

- Geodetic Survey Baseline, Hoppers Crossing and Stones, Werribee and Tarneit, and Green Hill Extension Marker (HO078, VHR H1957)
- Village of Wyndham (Werribee) original survey blocks
- Werribee Park mansion and estate (HO2, VHR H1613)
- Closer and Soldier settlers' houses, Werribee South

6.1 Exploration and survey

The area to the west of Melbourne was perhaps better known to the early settlers in the period before 1830s than much of the country to the east. The Werribee plains had been visited and reported on by Matthew Flinders in 1802 and by Hume and Hovell in 1824. While navigating the south coast of Australia in 1802, the British navigator Flinders charted Port Phillip Bay. He went ashore and climbed to the highest point of the You Yangs, naming it 'Station Peak'. Whalers and sealers who were working the southern coastline may also have entered the bay over the following decades. In 1803 Charles Grimes had explored further west of the Saltwater (Maribyrnong) River and described the Werribee plains as 'one third grass, one third stone and one-third soil'.[27]

Transported British convict William Buckley, who escaped from the penal settlement at Sorrento in 1803, lived in Wadawurrung Country for thirty-two years. He later recounted his experiences to John Morgan, who published an account of his 'life and times' in 1852.[28] Buckley would have crossed the Werribee plains countless times and been familiar with many places on the Werribee River, the coast and the wetlands. Buckley learnt much about the variety of the country, of its interesting features like caves and islands, and the ample food resources that could be found. He learnt about the culture and traditions of the Wadawurrung and came to only speak their language, forgetting his own as a result.

The explorers Hamilton Hume and William Hovell, along with Aboriginal guides, crossed the Werribee Plains in 1824, stopping at Point Cook and camping at various places before turning back at Hovells Creek at Corio Bay, which Hovell incorrectly assumed was Westernport Bay. Local historian Lance Pritchard has conducted historical research and reassessed the historical record of Hume and Hovell's journey, including the descriptions of the journey by Hovell, however, and determined that they instead terminated their journey further east at the Werribee River.[29] Nonetheless, Hume and Hovell's expedition marks an early ingress of European explorers into the municipality.[30] The importance of this

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27 J.J. Ryder, 'Early History of Werribee', quoted in *Werribee Shire Banner*, 3 January 1924, p. 6.

28 John Morgan 1852, *The Life and Times of William Buckley*, Archibald MacDougall, Hobart.

29 Lance Pritchard, *Hume and Hovell Expedition Termination*, *Second Edition*, March 2023, Midway Print Solutions, Sunshine West

30 A conclusion on where the Hume and Hovell expedition terminated has not formed part of this thematic history. Historical research and debate on this topic are ongoing. For further information, see Lance Pritchard, *Hume and Hovell Expedition Termination*, *Second Edition*, March 2023, Midway Print Solutions, Sunshine West. The Australian Dictionary of Biography also contains information about the expedition, see entries for Hamilton Hume and William Hilton Hovell.

journey to Werribee has been marked by the memorial at the corner Werribee Street and Watton Street. See section 17.5.

Apart from Buckley's long period with the Wadawurrung, and the explorers, Hume and Hovell's brief passage through the area in 1824, it was not until John Batman and his party landed at Indented Head in May 1835 that Aboriginal people occupying what is now the Wyndham municipality had significant and sustained contact with the British. For many years prior, however, they would have seen the white-masted vessels of foreign seafarers on the horizon, and perhaps would have seen some of these strangers come ashore. The foreign invaders recorded their observations of the Aboriginal people in this area. In 1824 Hume and Hovell noted the 'general prosperity' of the Aboriginal people on the Werribee plains.[31] In 1835 John Batman, while crossing the Werribee plains, observed smoke rising from an Aboriginal camp beneath the You Yangs.[32]

In the years that followed the arrival of permanent settlers, Aboriginal people continued to occupy the area and follow many of their traditional practices despite the enormous difficulties this must have posed. An early arrival, Stephen Anderson, recalled seeing between 200 and 300 Aboriginal people camped on the Werribee in the early days of the settlement.[33] Members of the Pinkerton family, who were involved in the early pastoral settlement of the district, retold a story of cooking a big cauldron of rice for the Aboriginal people when they came past once a year for corroborees.[34]

Living in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in the 1820s, John Batman had eagerly read the accounts of Hume and Hovell's expedition to Port Phillip and the promising sheep country they encountered, and this prompted a long-considered plan, from the late 1820s, to take up land at Port Phillip. Batman followed Hume's account in determining that he should land at Indented Head on the Bellarine Peninsula. He was a member of the Port Phillip Association (originally the Geelong and Dutigalla Association), which was a syndicate formed in Launceston in 1835 with the objective of taking up land for pastoral expansion at Port Phillip. Batman landed at Indented Head in May 1835 and made his way across the Werribee plains. HIs contemporary, John Pascoe Fawkner recounted in 1862, that Batman met with some Aboriginal women at or near the Werribee River in May 1835, giving them 'some beads and looking glasses'.[35] Batman was familiar with the map created by Hume and Hovell, and noted the 'Iramoo Plains', named as such by Hume and Hovell, who had relied on a local Aboriginal name.

At that time, the Port Phillip District was outside the bounds of legitimate settlement of NSW and Batman's proposed land grab was an illegal venture. Land was divided up by the members of the Port Phillip Association, with a number of allotments within the present-day City of Wyndham. These include allotment 11 (John Thomas Collicott), allotment 12 (Joseph Tice Gellibrand), allotment 13 (John Helder Wedge) and allotment 15 (James Simpson), Surveyor J H Wedge prepared a plan of Port Phillip, in c. 1835, in which he identified the land claimed by the Association's members, with the Werribee area shown as 'grassy plains' (Figure 7).

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31 Cited in Allom Lovell Sanderson 1985, 'Werribee Park Metropolitan Park: Conservation analysis', p. 295.

32 Evers and Clark 2014, 'The You Yangs'.

33 Murray 1974, p. 116.

34 Frances Overmars, pers. comm., November 2020.

35 J.P. Fawkner, 'Reminiscences of the Colony of Victoria', *Leader*, 14 June 1862, p. 6.

The Werribee River bisects the municipality, and has long been a significant landmark of the district, both for the local Aboriginal people, and for early European explorers and surveyors. The river was given the name 'Arndell' by Hume and Hovell, and was named the Peel and then the Ex (Exe) by Surveyor John Helder Wedge.[36] 'Werribee' was an adaptation of the local Aboriginal word for spine, 'weariby', with a local Wautharong [Wadawurrung] man informing Wedge that the river was known as the Weariby Yallock (stream).[37] Werribee River was adopted as the river's name by the Government surveyor John Charles Darke in his 1839-40 survey of the district.[38]

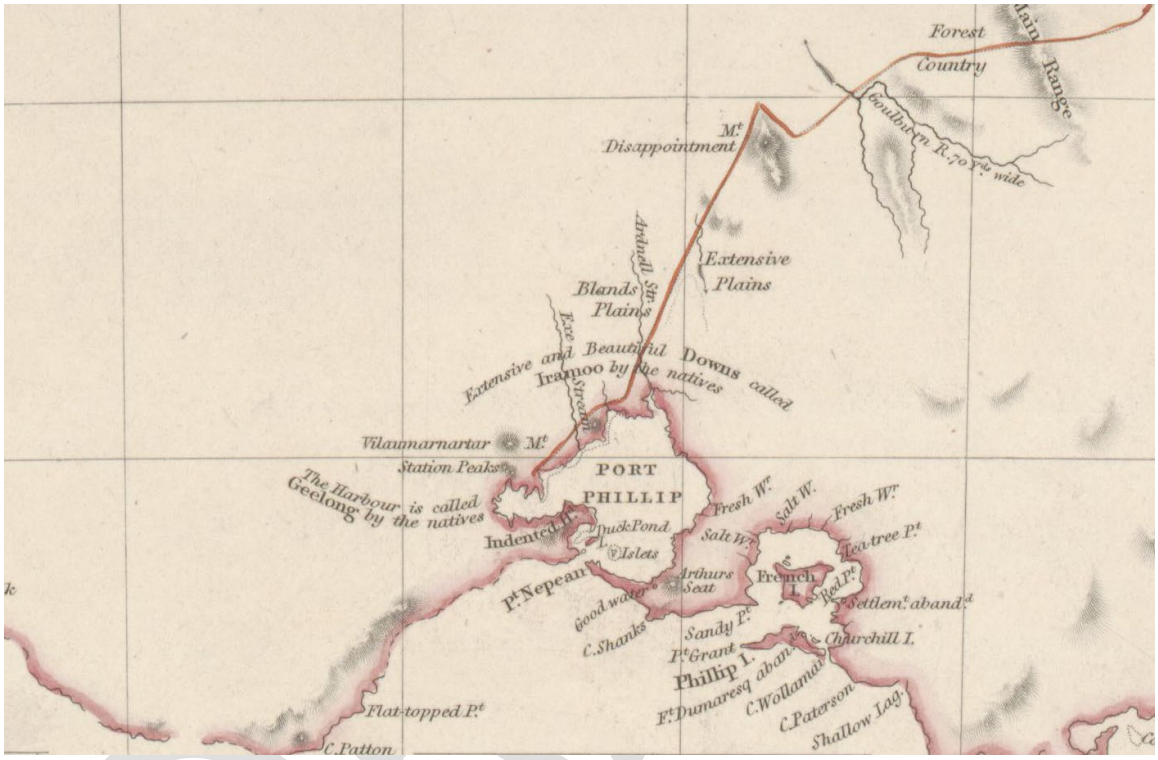

Figure 6 John Arrowsmith, Map of Australia, 1832. Red line indicates the line of the Hume and Hovell expedition
Source: National Library of Australia

36 There is some dispute as to whether Arndell refers to the Werribee River or the Maribyrnong River.

37 'History of the Werribee Riverr – Bunorong Story', The Loop, Wyndham City Council, https://theloop.wyndham.vic.gov.au/RAP/bunurong-story, accessed 26 July 2023.

38 'Werribee', eMelbourne, University of Melbourne, 2008, https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM01598b.htm, accessed 26 July 2023.

Figure 7 Detail of J H Wedge's plan of Port Phillip, showing land claimed by members of the Port Phillip Association
Source: MS13487, State Library of Victoria

6.1.1 Village and town surveys

Aboriginal settlements along the Victorian Volcanic Plains and alongside waterways and the coast were prevalent prior to, and upon European settlement.

With the settlement of Port Phillip District made official by 1836, surveys of the Port Phillip district took place over the subsequent decades. Parishes and counties were surveyed under the direction of chief surveyor, Robert Hoddle, and later by his successor Andrew Clarke.

Aside from the agricultural areas of the municipality, there were two small townships surveyed in the nineteenth century. In 1849, the village of Wyndham was laid out on both sides of the Werribee River (Figure 8), with the river initially marking the dividing line between the Parish of Deutgam in the County of Bourke (east bank) and the Parish of Mambourin in the Country of Grant (west bank).[39] Typical of town surveys of the mid-nineteenth century, the Wyndham township's grid arrangement of rectangular blocks and allotments ignored the serpentine course of the river. The town survey expanded quickly, with the plan at Figure 9, also dating to 1850 with later amendments, shows the additional allotments to the north-west and south-east, and the street names, and reserves for the racecourse, pound and railway.

39 See Robert Hoddle, 'Plan of the Township of Wyndham' 1849, reproduced in Geoff Hocking 2013, *Wyndham: Our story*, p. 29.

In 1852, the township of Rothwell was surveyed at the river crossing site, although this village site was to the south of the present township of Little River (Figure 10).[40] As with the Werribee township survey, the Rothwell allotments were rectangular in shape, avoiding the curves of the Little River.

Figure 8 Survey plan of Township of Wyndham, 1849, signed by Assistant Surveyor, William Malcolm and countersigned by then Senior Surveyor, Robert Hoddle
Source: Sydney M6, Historic Plan Collection, VPRS 8168/P5

40 'Plan of township and suburbs of Rothwell on the Little River', R34, put-away plan, Central Plan Office, Landata, Secure Electronic Registries Victoria.

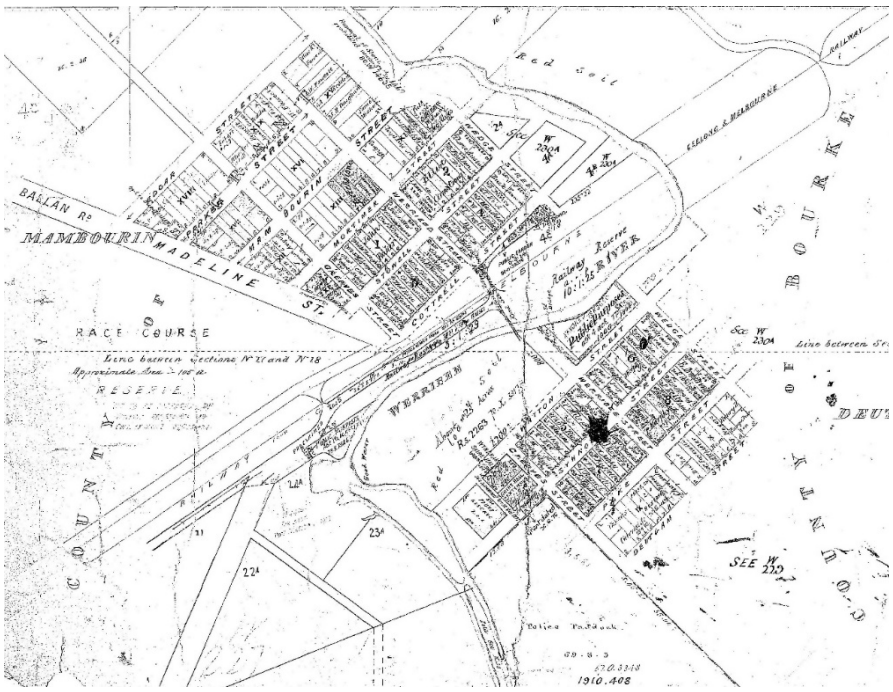

Figure 9 Plan of town of Wyndham (Werribee) showing expanded township reserve
Source: W227, put-away plan, Central Plan Office, Landata

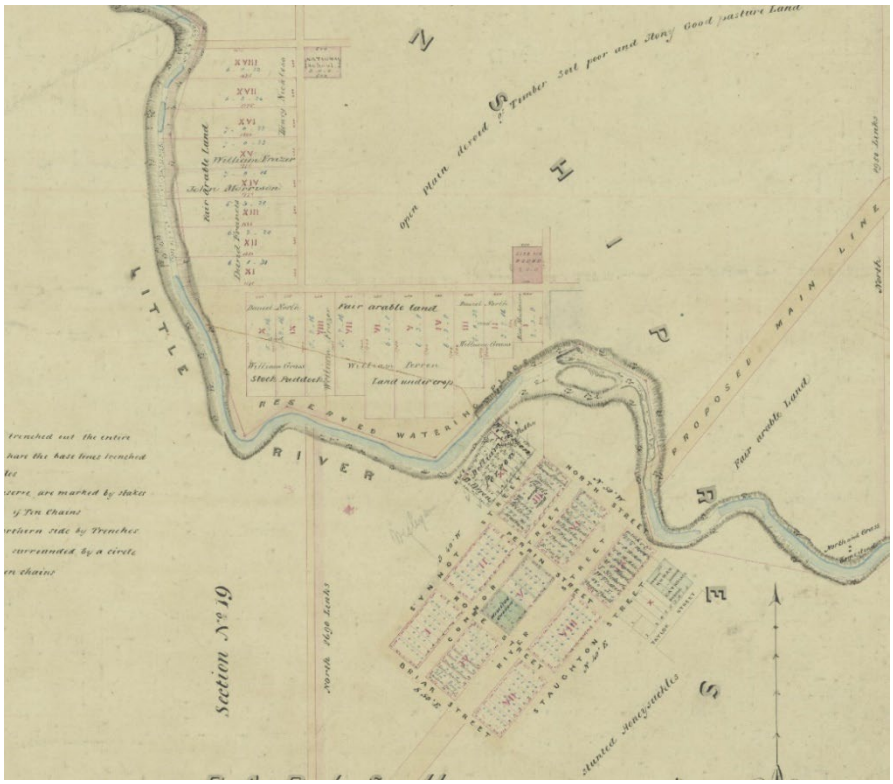

Figure 10 Plan of Rothwell on the Little River, drawn 1853. Note only allotments on north and east of the river are within the City of Wyndham
Source: FEATR398, VPRS 8168, Public Record Office Victoria

6.1.2 Geodetic Survey

With its proximity to Melbourne and relative flat topography, the Werribee area provided a suitable location for the Victorian government to base the important Victorian Geodetic Survey of 1858 to 1872. The triangulated survey was established by Surveyor-General Charles Ligard and carried out by Victorian Government Astronomer, Robert Ellery. It provided accurate survey markers to inform government and private land surveys, replacing the less reliable magnetic surveys.[41] The flat plains of Werribee were selected for the baseline (Figure 11), and permanent marker stones were established trough 1860. The South Base Stone was located approximately 3.8 kilometres east of the Werribee Railway Station and the North Base Stone five miles (eight kilometres) to its north-west in Tarneit. The baseline was extended to Green Hill (now Eynesbury) for a total of nine miles (14 kilometres).[42] Both the North and South Base stone markers are situated within the municipality. The South stone was the subject of a National Trust of Australia (Victoria) preservation campaign in the 1980s.[43]

A trigonometric point was established at the highest point at Point Cook, which was a coastal dune.[44]

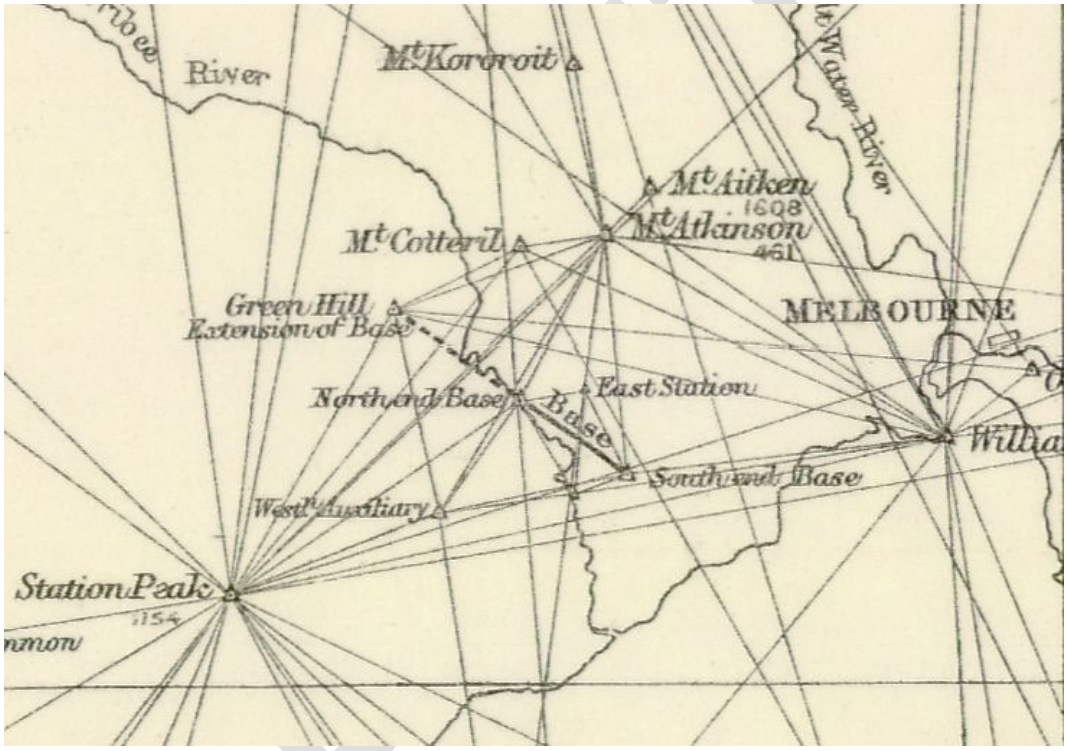

Figure 11 Detail of 'The triangulation of Victoria' map, c. 1870, with the Werribee base line shown
Source: Department of Crown Lands and Survey, Victoria, State Library of Victoria

41 'Geodetic Survey of Victoria, 1858-1872', Museums Victoria, https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/1501, accessed 29 May 2023.

42 'H1957 - Geodetic Survey Baseline', Victorian Heritage Register citation, Victorian Heritage Database, https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/6068, accessed 29 May 2023.

43 Context, 'Geodetic Survey Baseline', City of Wyndham Heritage Study - Volume 2, 1997, p. 288.

44 MMBW c. 1990, 'Point Cook Metropolitan Park' (brochure).

6.2 Pastoral settlement

The early pastoral settlers, keen to expand their operations, beheld the Iramoo Plains as a vast sheepwalk, and the plains as fine pastoral country. It was an extensive tract of good country, fed by regular waterways and with minimal tree cover so that tree-felling did not pose an additional burden to settlers. Although there was little topographic variation across the volcanic plains, the country was rich in resources. It was recorded as red-black loamy soil, enriched by ancient volcanic activity and well-watered by the various creeks and by the Werribee River with its extensive flood plain.[45] . The Werribee plains were clothed mainly in Kangaroo Grass and lightly timbered with She-oak, stunted Banksia, tea tree and other species, with scattered River Red Gums on the flood plains. Government surveyor William Wedge Darke described the Werribee plains in 1841 as 'the finest possible sheep pasture, and so sufficiently watered that they are fully occupied by squatters whose flocks are in excellent condition, even when the plains are burnt up by summer'.[46]

The first British settlers were the members of the Port Phillip Association, who came across from Van Diemen's Land and settled illegally in 1835; others followed from NSW and then from the British Isles. In 1835-36 John Helder Wedge and James Simpson, both members of the Port Phillip Association, formed a sheep station on the Lower Werribee 'at the confluence of the salt and fresh water'.[47] Charles Wedge joined them as their agent.[48] J.H. Wedge had served as a surveyor to John Batman and the Port Phillip Association and brought over sheep from Launceston.[49] His brother Edward Wedge also took up a pastoral license on the lower Werribee River in 1836.

The early pastoral runs established a home station comprising rudimentary shepherds' huts positioned at strategic distant locations. Nearby watercourses provided water for stock and also a ready-made sheepwash. Early pastoral runs included River Ex, Truganina, Black Forest, Werribee Lower, Cocoroc and Lollypop Ponds. Henry Grass, who held the Cocoroc run, had an out-station was on the east side of the Little River.[50] A 'hut in ruins' was marked on the Werribee parish plan, west of the Werribee River, dated 1859; this was possibly an early abandoned shepherd's hut on Grass's run.[51] James Anderson took up the pre-emptive right of 320 acres at Lollypop Ponds in 1848.[52] James Austin took up a pre-emptive right to 400 acres of the Black Forest run. In the north of the municipality were the holdings of W.J.T. 'Big' Clarke, who arrived at Geelong in 1837 and ran sheep at Little River and the You Yangs. Clarke went on to become the richest man in Australia, and the country's reputed first millionaire.[53] He

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45 See map, 'Soil Map of Australia', c. 1940s, reproduced in Richard Aitken, *Modernism*.

46 William Wedge Darke, cited in Murray 1974, p. 11.

47 T.F. Bride (ed.) 1898, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*, Government Printer, Melbourne, p. 161.

48 Cannon (ed.) 1984, p. 426.

49 R.V. Billis and A.S. Kenyon 1930, *Pastures New: An account of the pastoral occupation of Port Phillip*, Macmillan, Bird & Co., Melbourne, p. 34.

50 Geological Survey of Victoria, Cocooroc 1863 (SLV). Grass's Out Station was noted on an early map of Port Phillip c. late 1830s (SLV).

51 Thomas Nelson, 'Country lots, Parish of Werribee, County of Grant', 1859, Crown Lands Office, Melbourne (Public Record Office Victoria).

52 *Werribee Parish Plan*, Department of Crown Lands and Survey, Melbourne, 1880 (Australian National University).

53 Peel 1974, p. 52.

erected a mansion 'Rupertswood' at Sunbury (outside the municipality) and his landholdings were so extensive that his sheep run stretched into the parish of Truganina to the north.[54] By 1837, other squatters established at Little River included Synnot, Wallace and Pettett.[55]

It is likely that local Aboriginal people were employed at some of the larger properties. The Chirnsides had employed Aboriginal workers on the Wannon in the Western District, which suggests that they may have done the same in the Werribee district in the early 1850s.[56] Bertram Armytage of Wooloomanata station near the You Yangs (located outside the City of Wyndham) employed a local Aboriginal man Billy Leigh of the 'You Yang tribe', who was given the European name of 'King Billy'. Attired in the apparel of the servants of the British landed gentry, Billy Leigh worked as the coachman for Wooloomanata. He would drive the team of four to and from the Little River railway station and further afield. He died in the early 1900s and he was buried in Geelong's Eastern Cemetery.[57] Furthermore, Aboriginal guides were likely enlisted for exploration and survey work on pastoral runs.

Pastoral settlers with sufficient capital sought to further consolidate their holdings, and often monopolised the best land, for example the area alongside watercourses. The most successful pastoral settlers in the district, Scottish-born brothers Thomas and Andrew Chirnside, had already consolidated extensive land holdings at Point Cook, before acquiring in 1853 Wedge's former run on the Werribee River. The Chirnsides obtained the land following the death of several members of the Wedge family in severe floods in 1852, after which the remaining members of the family left the district. The Chirnsides went on to purchase countless freehold parcels through the 1850s across the parishes of Werribee, Tarneit and Mambourin. In total, they held 82,000 acres of land just over 20 miles from Melbourne.[58]

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54 James 1985, p. 31.

55 Blake 1973, vol. 2, p. 994. (Note that Synnot's home station was on the west bank of the Little River and outside the study area.)

56 Murray 1974, p. 42.

57 Frank Shaw c. 1993, *Little River: A place to remember*, Hamilton Printing Works, Lara, p. 5; David Burke 2009, *Body at the Melbourne Club: Bertram Armytage, Antarctica's forgotten man*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, pp. 32-33.

58 Sutherland 1888, vol. 2, p. 171.

Figure 12 James Austin took up a pre-emptive right to the Black Forest pastoral run, within the Parish of Tarneit, shown here plan with the existing buildings marked close to the river; from Tarneit Parish Plan, drawn by Charles Wedge, 1853.
Source: State Library Victoria

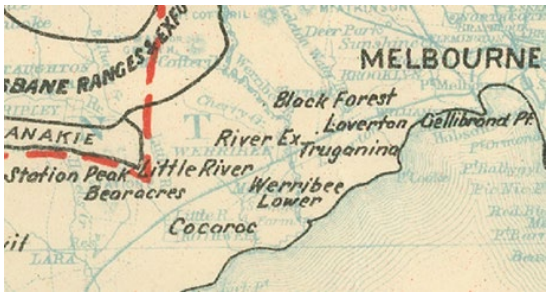

Figure 13 A.S. Kenyon, Map showing the pastoral holdings of the Port Phillip district 1835–51, Crown Lands Department, Melbourne, 1932.
Source: State Library Victoria

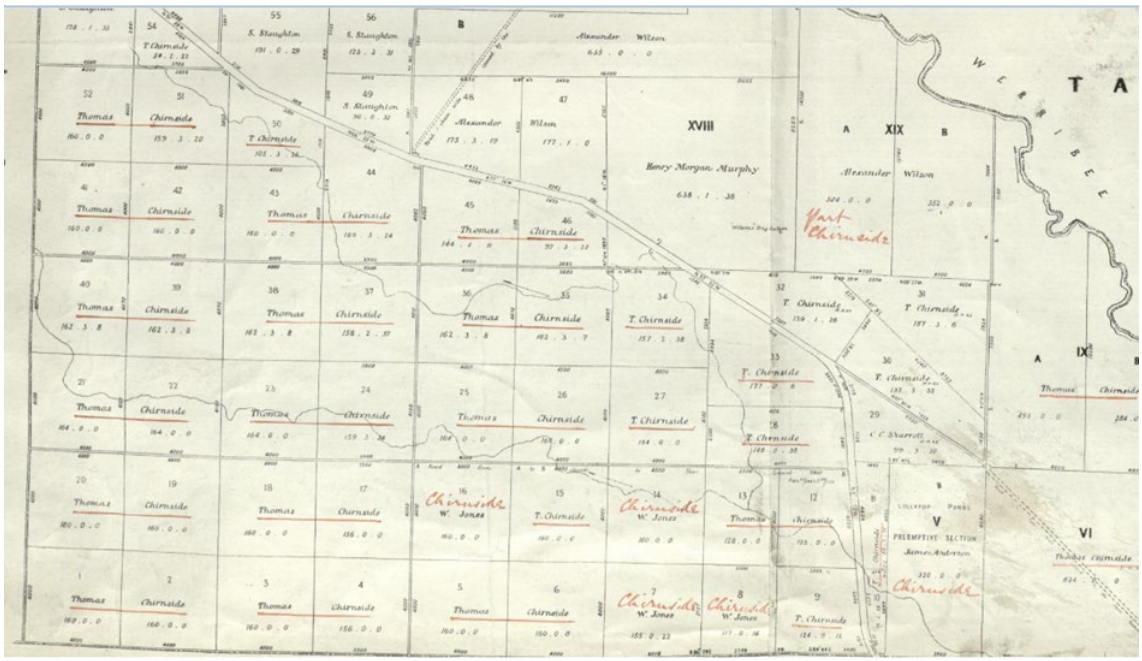

Figure 14 Section from the Werribee parish plan, 1880, showing the comprehensive acquisition of allotments by the Chirnsides.
Source: State Library Victoria

6.3 Buildings and structures

Many of the earliest dwellings in the district would have been rudimentary structures that drew on the vernacular building techniques settlers brought with them from the Old World. The profusion of surface stone provided the settlers with a readily available building material, and many of the Highland Scots would have been familiar with construction methods that utilised stone. The early dwellings of workers and small holders would have been constructing using vernacular techniques, including sod, wattle-and-daub, adobe, and rubble construction. J.H. Wedge refers to a sod hut built on the Werribee River in 1836.[59] The same year, several early settlers initially occupied tents.[60] Masonry construction would have been reserved for the wealthy, although the prevalence of large bluestone homes on pastoral stations indicates a preference to use the materials at hand. Masonry was otherwise reserved for churches and public buildings.

A distinctive feature of the Werribee Plains are the drystone walls that were made using the surface rock that settlers utlised. There was a requirement for those who were first to take up land from the Crown to fence their holdings.[61] The City of Wyndham lies at the eastern edge of the third largest basalt plain in the world and surface stone was not in short supply. Surviving drystone walls represent some of the earliest built fabric of the settlement period, but the walls were also often built and rebuilt over many decades. Often the drystone walls have survived in a complex comprising a farmhouse and stone farm buildings. At one property on the Skeleton Creek the drystone walls cross the creek to reflect the water rights of the landowner.[62] Drystone walls stopped being built when other materials became affordable, and notably, when barbed wire became available in the 1880s. Where there was not a lot of timber but unlimited stone on the ground, it was the cheapest option.

Parallel to the settlers' stone structures, are remnant stone foundations, fish traps, fencing and other stone structures built by Aboriginal people for housing, aquaculture and animal carrells and gardens.

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59 Murray 1974, p. 11.

60 Michael Cannon (ed.) 1984, *Historical Records of Victoria, vol. 3: The Early Development of Melbourne 1836–1839*, pp. 425–26.

61 Biosis 2020, 'Don't Fence Me In', webinar on drystone walls.

62 Biosis 2020, 'Don't Fence Me In'.

Figure 15 Drystone walling on the Western Plains.
Source: Winty Calder, Beyond the View, 1981, p. 97

Figure 16 Drystone walls, Old Melbourne Road, Little River
Source: Gary Vines, Wyndham Dry Stone Walls, 2015

6.3.1 Homesteads

The dominance of the Chirnside family resulted in the construction of multiple homesteads. An early bluestone homestead dating to c. 1850 was extant on the property when the Chirnsides acquired Point Cook, which they subsequently extended.[63] Another modest bluestone homestead was built at Werribee Park in the late 1850s. As the Chirnside brothers became prosperous, they continued to consolidate land. They eventually accumulated an extensive estate in the Werribee area, acquiring a total of 47,000 acres. The Chirnside family had erected an assortment of bluestone buildings on the land from the late 1850s and 1860s, including a modest bluestone homestead, shearers' quarters, storerooms, and stables. In 1872, their nephew Robert Chirnside built an Italianate bluestone homestead at Mount Rothwell (outside the study area).

The Chirnsides' boldest statement was Werribee Park (Figure 17), built between 1873 and 1877 — an Italianate mansion rather than a homestead, which cost the exorbitant sum of around £60,000.[64] Built from sandstone and bluestone, it was easily the grandest edifice erected in the district, and probably the grandest private home erected in Victoria and one of the largest in Australia.[65] The extravagance of Werribee Park followed the British tradition of the landed gentry occupying a lavish country home on a vast estate.

An extensive homestead complex like Werribee Park required a large number of staff to ensure that all operations ran efficiently. Workers' housing was an integral part of Werribee Park, and the Chirnsides provided accommodation for many staff who worked on the property. Domestic servants working at Werribee Park, and likewise at some of the other larger homesteads, were housed in servants' quarters, which were often upstairs above the working end of the house, or in wings connected to the main house in close proximity to the kitchen, similar to the practice in Britain. During the shearing season shearers, who were often single men, were often lodged in rudimentary, dormitory-style buildings or huts.

63 MMBW 1981, p. xx

64 'Werribee Park', Victorian Heritage Database, Place ID1207.

65 Sutherland 1888, vol. 2, p.xx.

Employees were not necessarily limited to rudimentary dwellings. The Chirnside family also erected a ten-room house on their land in the 1890s for Adam Hastie, who managed the property for the family.[66] A small villa-style gate lodge was also erected at the entrance to the property for staff. A sample of the extensive buildings at Werribee Park can be seen in the 1880s photograph by Fred Kruger at Figure 18.

Figure 17 Photograph of Werribee Park mansion by Fred Kruger viewed from the southeast in 1880, only a few years after its completion.
Source: 'South East View of Werribee Park Mansion', State Library Victoria, Accession no. H24834

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66 'Werribee Park', Victorian Heritage Database, Place ID1207.

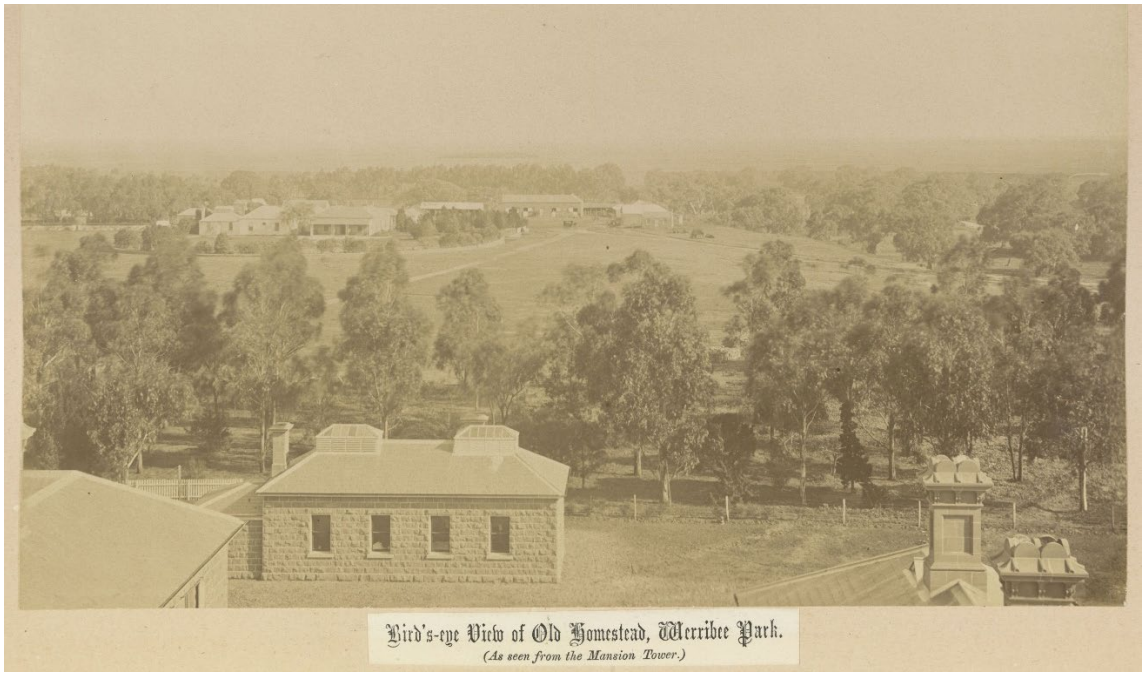

Figure 18 Fred Kruger, View from the tower at Werribee Park, c. 1882, looking towards the farm buildings.
Source: H24833, State Library of Victoria

6.4 Impact of settlement: dispossession and frontier conflict

Pastoral settlement, proved catastrophic for Aboriginal people. Their world was turned upside down owing to the impacts of disease, abuse and intolerance of alcohol, violence and aggression of settlers, loss of Country, and lack of access to food and water; the distress and trauma this caused is unfathomable and was poorly understood or simply not understood by the colonists.

Conflict was endemic on the pastoral frontier in the Port Phillip District. The murder of squatter Charles Franks and his shepherd at Mt Cottrell by Aboriginal people in 1836 struck fear into the minds of the new settlers at Port Phillip. Franks' callous attitude towards Aboriginal people was not widely known, and it is quite possible that he was killed in revenge.[67] Subsequent brutalities were not always recorded but local histories note the unofficial reports of crimes being committed against Aboriginal people, for example the use of arsenic in flour given to a local tribe.[68] The Native Police were employed to assist with minimising trouble on the frontier and would certainly have moved through and operated in what is now the Wyndham municipality.

The impacts of colonisation on local Aboriginal people in the Werribee district were swift and extensive. There were few Aboriginal people reported to be residing in the district by the 1860s. In their annual reports submitted from 1860, the Board for the Protection of Aborigines does not include reports from local correspondents in Werribee or Little River; the closest correspondents were at Geelong and Bacchus Marsh.[69] A reserve of 640 acres was set aside in 1859 in the parish of Balliang (outside the

67 Kiddle 1961 p. 34; Murray 1974, p. 11.

68 Murray 1974, p. xx; James and Pritchard 2008, pp. 9-10; May 1989, no page numbers.

69 Board for the Protection of Aborigines, *Annual Report 1860*.

study area), about 20km south of Bacchus Marsh, 'for the use of the Aborigines' in the Moorabool and Werribee districts.[70]

In the course of British settlement, Aboriginal people had their traditional Country taken from them, and assigned to newcomers who sought to 'improve' the land and to generate revenue from it. Aboriginal people lived in Aboriginal 'camps', designated as such by the authorities, or to eke out an existence on Crown land reserves, such as the riverbank, railway reserves, and the foreshore. It is possible that some Aboriginal people camped at the police paddock in Werribee as the police had an obligation to provide rations to Aboriginal people. Some of the Wauthurung [Wadwaurrung] from Werribee may have spent time at the Buntingdale Wesleyan Mission at Birregurra and later at the Aboriginal Camping Reserve at Bacchus Marsh.[71] There is little evidence in documentary records of Aboriginal people being in the Werribee district in the 1850s and 1860s, although some surely were. In the early 1860s the remaining Aboriginal people in Melbourne moved to Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve near Healesville. Some Aboriginal people visited Werribee in the late-nineteenth century, for example the talented singers from the Maloga Mission near Echuca, who performed at the Werribee Mechanics Institute in 1893.[72]

6.5 Agricultural settlement

6.5.1 Holdings before 1860

The Werribee area was declared a 'settled area' by 1847. Parcels of Crown land, usually up to 200 or 300 acres, were available for purchase as freehold title in the area from the 1850s.

Many small farmers were established in the area in the 1850s, including a number of Irish settlers around Little River. Michael Gleeson's bluestone farmhouse Tarcombe (HO73) fronting the Little River dates to this period. Other notable early farms were May Farm and Leakes farm, both at Truganina.

The area which comprises the City of Wyndham included the parishes of Mambourin, Deutgam, Werribee, Bulban and Cocoroc, in the counties of Bourke and Grant. The majority of land surveyed in the municipality was as farming land, with allotments ranging in size from 30 acres to 640 acres. The large allotments often reflected the pre-emptive right selection of former pastoral lands, and included William Armstrong's Black Forest pre-emptive right in Mambourin and James Anderson's Lollypop Ponds pre-emptive right in the Parish of Werribee.[73]

Some landowners purchased a number of adjoining blocks. While this is most notably seen in Thomas Chirnside's vast landholding, other examples include Henry Grass & Sons' allotments in Cocoroc, and George Synnott's (or Synnot) purchases along the east bank of the Little River.[74] George Synnot was a

70 *VGG*, 26 June 1860, p. 1177.

71 Caldere and Goff 1991, *Aboriginal Reserves and Missions in Victoria*, pp. 4, 8.

72 *Williamstown Chronicle*, 8 July 1893, p. 3.

73 Parish plans, M59 (3) Mambourin and W121(3) Werribee, Put-Away Plans, Central Plan Office, Landata, SERV.

74 Parish plans C249(3), Cocoroc, and L5590 Bulban.

prominent land and stock agent in Geelong, whose brother Monckton held the Moyong pastoral run on the west side of the river.[75]

In the east of the municipality in the parish of Truganina, large parcels of land were purchased by J.P. Fawkner, Alfred Langhorne and W. Cherry. The success of small farmers in this early period was limited, but those with sufficient capital could consolidate freehold allotments to form larger pastoral properties. Farmers and small holders argued that this was unrestrained acquisition was undemocratic and sought reforms to the way Crown land was allocated for small holders.

There was a growing sense of simmering animosity from small-scale farmers towards the dominant landholders of the district, particularly the Chirnsides. This included a sense of special treatment by the authorities, such as the use of public reserves for sheep, 'depriving the bulk of inhabitants of the use of the reserves for their cattle', as well as the clearing of timber from the Cocoroc swamp. A letter from local farmer, William Ison of 1878 notes:

> Chirnsides are daley [sic.] carting timber with 2 waggons, from the swamp … if it is a government swamp, it is a great injustice to the inhabitants … depreciating the value of the land, while other people who have more right to it than him are debarred from going on it …[76]

The reported actions of the Chrinsides had 'strengthened the opinions of the inhabitants and caused a jeliously [sic.]'.[77] Other reported actions by the Chirnsides, including denying access to water and punishments for transgressions of their property, would not have assisted this tension.

75 Mary Turner Shaw, 'Synnot, Monckton (1826–1879)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/synnot-monckton-4683/text7749, published first in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 2 August 2023.

76 William Ison, correspondence, 17 January 1878, VPRS 5357/P0/5857, Public Record Office Victoria, via R Harrigan, Werribee District Historical Society.

77 William Ison, correspondence, 15 February 1878, VPRS 5357/P0/5857, Public Record Office Victoria, via R Harrigan, Werribee District Historical Society.

Figure 19 Early farmhouse of William Ison on Bulban Road, Werribee, was constructed of adobe. Source: Miles Lewis, *Victorian Primitive*, 1977, p. 36; photograph by Miles Lewis

6.5.2 Land selection

The Victorian land acts of the 1860s, often referred to as the 'selection acts', enabled small holders to acquire land before survey (the blocks acquired were known as selections). Much of the Crown land in the Werribee and Little River area had already been sold (mostly in the 1850s), which meant that the selection acts did not have much impact on local settlement patterns, except in some parts of the northern and western areas of the municipality.

Under the legislation of the 1860s, selection required that certain improvements were made to the property, including fencing, the erection of a dwelling, and the clearing of land (if necessary). Farmhouses were often rudimentary, and usually built of timber. Buildings and building materials were often recycled.

Farmers' commons, which provided selectors with common grazing land, were provided for as part of the *Duffy Land Act* of 1862. This provided a sort of insurance policy if crops had a bad year; there was always access to pastoral land for grazing. Selectors made use of the government 'commons' that had been reserved, although existing farmers who had purchased freehold land in the area also claimed a right to use the commons.

The Farmers' Common for Agriculturalists was established in Little River in 1861, predating the Duffy Land Act. It comprised 20,000 acres of land around the township, and had been established following agitation from local residents, including John Rees, later a member of the Legislative Assembly for Grant. The common was representative of the disputes between the pastoralists and local farmers about

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access and use of Crown land.[78] The remnant drystone walls in Little River are evidence of the farmers common (HO130).

6.5.3 Closer settlement

The Closer Settlement Board was established by the Victorian Government in 1905, following the *Closer Settlement Act* the previous year, to administer the new developments in agricultural settlement. In particular, the Closer Settlement Board developed models of improved settlement in areas that could sustain a greater concentration of farming properties, or where irrigation schemes could be introduced to enable greater settlement in the area. Closer settlement in the Werribee area was closely tied to the irrigation schemes developed by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and extended to the Soldier Settlement Schemes developed after the First World War.

The Werribee irrigation Area was fed with an unlimited supply of water from the Melton Reservoir. While pastoralists relied on good rains, the irrigation channels provided block holders with an insurance policy against dry seasons. By 1920, the Werribee irrigation district was thriving with 60 block holders finding it most profitable growing lucerne hay. It was reported of the irrigation area that 'these well laid out blocks look a picture'.[79] Other enterprising activities on closer settlement blocks included fruit-growing, dairying and poultry. By the 1930s market gardening had become the chief occupation in Werribee South. The relatively small allotments taken up under the land selection schemes can be seen in the parish plan at Figure 20. Under the terms of the lease, selector farmers had to undertake improvements to their property, and once the terms of the lease had been satisfied, were able to acquire the land as freehold property. Modest timber cottages which remain in Werribee South are representative of this phase of farming.

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78 'Little River Farmers Common', Context Pty Ltd, *City of Wyndham Heritage Study,* 1997, p. 31.,

79 *Weekly Times*, 22 May 1922, p. 9.

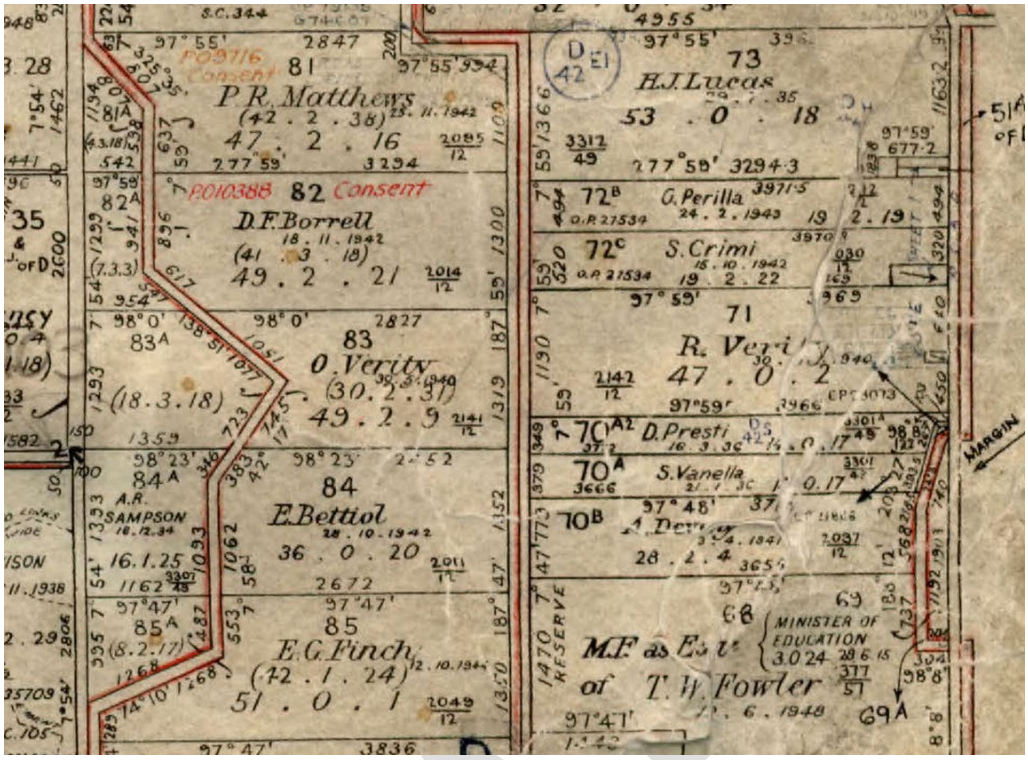

Figure 20 Detail, Deutgam parish plan D42(6), showing allotments between Diggers and O'Connors roads, which were taken up in Werribee South under the settlement schemes
Source: Central Plan Office, Landata

Figure 21 Dilapidated farmhouse, O'Connors Road, Werribee South; this was probably erected during the era of the Closer Settlement Board.
Source: Context, 2020

6.5.4 Soldier Settlement

While soldier settlement was enabled by the *Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act* of 1917, it was essentially part of closer settlement and was administered by the Closer Settlement Board. Whereas soldier settlement schemes were dismally unsuccessful in many parts of Victoria, with a 40 per cent failure rate, the soldier settlers in the Werribee area did relatively well. They benefitted from a training period at the State Research Farm, and from the productive farming land of the district.[80] They also had the advantage of being situated close to the Melbourne market, which was easily accessible by train. The naming of Diggers Road remembers the soldier settlers. Returned solider, Alfred John Calf, was one such settler in Diggers Road, Werribee South, taking up allotments in 1922. He was engaged in dairying and lucerne growing on his farm, and a small residence was constructed fronting Diggers Road (since demolished). He eventually acquired his land as freehold in 1940.[81]

6.5.5 Relations between pastoralists and farmers

As was the case in many country districts of Victoria in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, there was at times a degree of tension, at times bordering on animosity, between pastoralists and farmers in the Werribee and Little River districts. The pastoralists, and the Chirnsides in particular, assumed a position of authority and superiority in terms of land management. Small farmers were disadvantaged by some of their practices, such as preventing access to public roads and utilising unsold Crown land for their purposes rather than allow the farmers to use it (both parties sought to use any available Crown land for grazing). At Little River, this conflict came to a head and spear-headed the movement to create farmers' commons across Victoria.[82] The sheer scale of difference in terms of relative economic position also impacted on relations between the two groups. The Chirnsides as major landowners also controlled much of the land in the township and were an influential voice on the local municipal council and in local affairs.

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80 Mantello 1986, pp. 19-20.

81 A J Calf, CA 26 and CA26A, Section K, Deutgam, parish plan, Central Plan Office, Landata, and VPRS 5714/P0000, 2017/12, Public Record Office Victoria.

82 James and Pritchard 2008, p. 28.

7.0 BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Places related to this theme include:

- Melbourne-Geelong Road, within the municipality
- Old Little River Hotel, Little River (HO56)
- Little River Railway Station and Goods Yard (HO91, VHR H1572)

7.1 Establishing early tracks and travel routes

From the mid-1830s, the Werribee River marked the first stop on the long road trip out from Melbourne to Geelong and the west. There were established tracks across the plains for a much longer period and it seems likely that the Melbourne–Geelong Road developed from a route that approximated an Aboriginal track. On his early plan of Port Phillip drawn in c. 1835, J.H. Wedge marked a track from Melbourne that swept north of the settlement, skirting around the West Melbourne swamp, and then heading west across the Werribee plains, which Wedge identified as 'Usual route from the Settlement to the Barrabool Hills, &c.' [83] It is likely that this route was an Aboriginal track, given that the term 'Barrabool' was most often referred to in connection with the 'Barrabool tribe' (a Wadawurrung family group). It is known the Wadawurrung made regular visits to the Melbourne area for inter-tribal meetings with other Kulin groups, and there were existing Aboriginal roads and routes through the municipality prior to the arrival of Europeans. The route to the west quickly became a well-trodden path of pastoralists, stockmen and shepherds, and all those who worked for and provided services to the pastoral industry. Initially these were tracks that followed the easiest path and best crossing points, and over time more defined routes were established. Many found the road notoriously dull. In the first few years of settlement the track was littered with surface stone, but this was cleared by roadwork operations of William Lonsdale c. 1840.[84] There were many mishaps in these early years of settlement at these crossing places where men and stock were injured.[85] From Melbourne, the first stop was the Werribee River, with two crossings to the north and south of the present Werribee town (Figure 22). From the Geelong side, the first stop was the Little River where the Travellers Rest Inn was licenced from mid-1839. Once a defined track was in place, places to rest and water the horses were established at the Werribee crossing. Here, blacksmiths situated their smithy on the main transport route and plied a steady trade, shoeing horses, and mending the axles of carts and coaches.

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83 Wedge 1835, Plan of Port Phillip.

84 Murray 1974, p. 17.

85 R.V. Billis and A.S. Kenyon 1930, *Pastures New: An account of the pastoral occupation of Port Phillip*, p. 111.

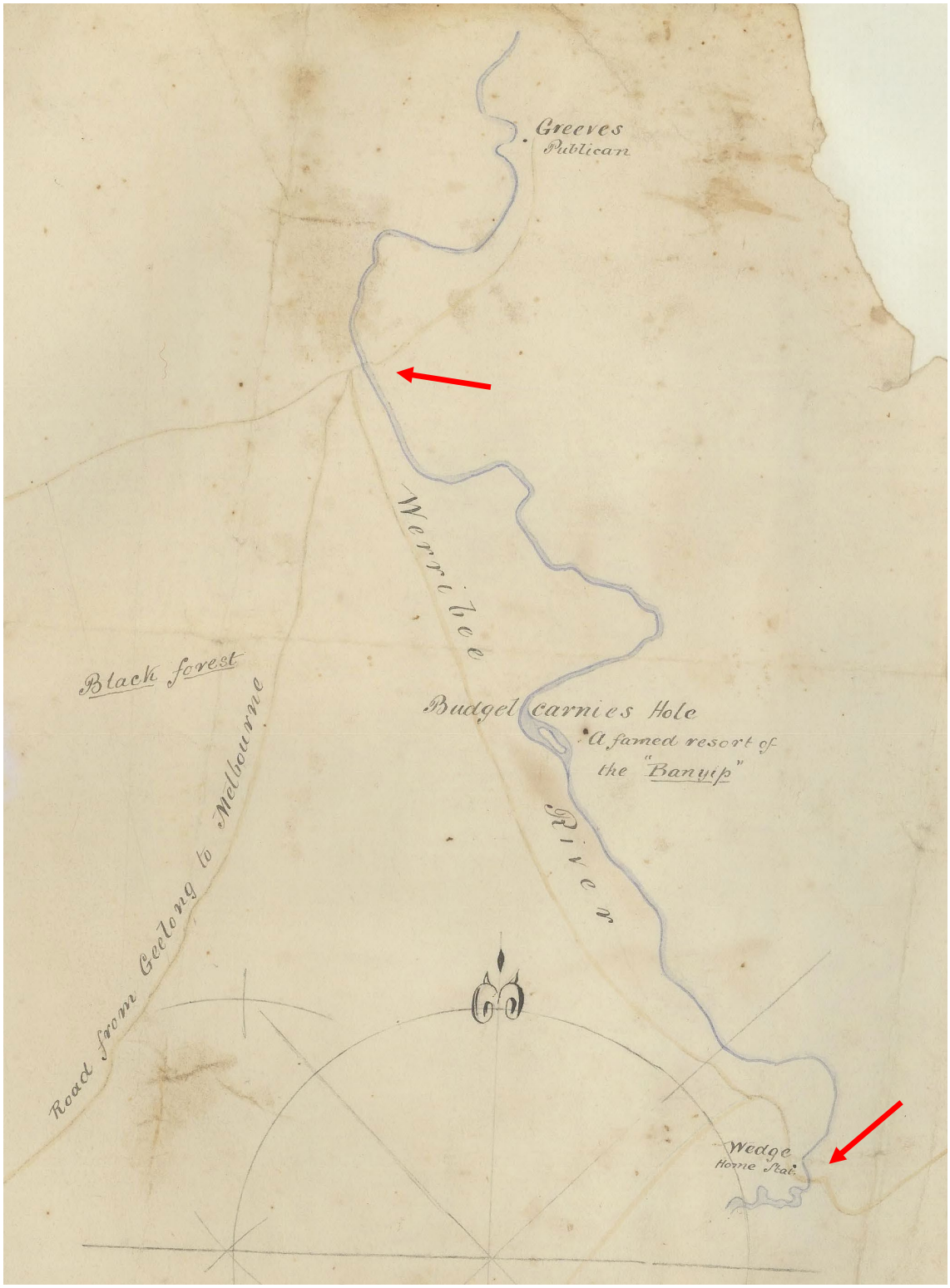

Figure 22 Detail of 1845 plan showing roads from Melbourne and crossings at the Werribee River (indicated), to the north and south of the present Werribee town
Source: RUN476, VPRS 8168, Public Record Office Victoria

7.2 Building roads and bridges

The earliest settlements in the municipality developed as stopping points on the roads that ran between Melbourne and Geelong; these points rapidly became the focal points for early settlers of the often-isolated surrounding pastoral properties. The Golden Fleece Inn, an early 'country hotel,' was built in 1837, of wattle-and-daub construction, and quickly became the customary stopping place for those travelling between the two settlements.[86] It was located near Greeves Ford, a crossing to the north of the present Werribee township, and it is understood that a number of other structures were built in this location, including houses and a shop .[87]

To arrive in the district from Melbourne in the earliest years of settlement, a traveller would be faced with a punt at the Maribyrnong River before reaching the Geelong Road, a track that had few accessible water sources. The Werribee River was a suitable stopping place to rest and water the horses, and an appropriate location for an early hotel.[88] A makeshift bridge, constructed from local timber and stone, provided access across the river in the vicinity of the hotel by 1840. At the western edge of municipality, Little River provided the same amenity to travellers making their way from Geelong. An early map of 1841 (Figure 23) shows two early crossing of the waterway, to the south of the present township, at what is now the Old Melbourne-Geelong Road and McLeans Road.

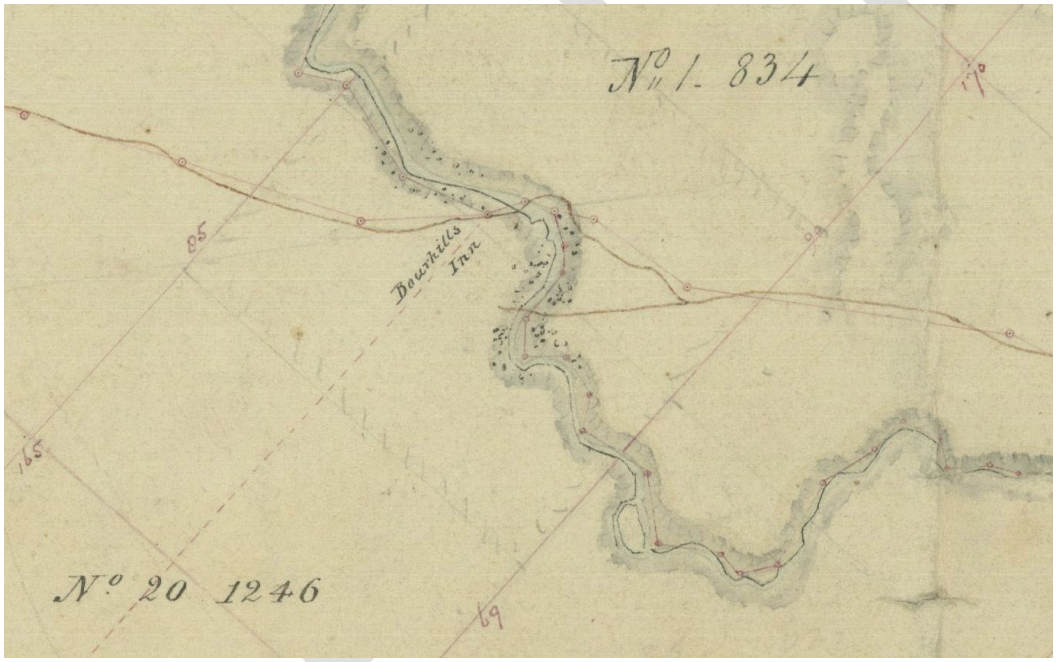

Figure 23 Detail of 1841 survey of existing and proposed roads between Melbourne and Geelong, showing two crossings at Little River
Source: Plan M5, VPRS 8168, Public Record Office Victoria

86 Murray 1974, p. 34; James 1985, p. 14.

87 'Greeves Station', Wyndham History, Wyndham City Council, https://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/9, accessed 31 July 2023; Werribee District Historical Society, Presentation to Council and consultation, 2023.

88 James 1985, p. 17.

Settlers in the Wyndham region often had to labour at their own rudimentary courses of travel to access the land. One such example of this is Cobbledick's Ford, a small crossing on the Werribee River, near Tarneit. The ford is paved in bluestone, a readily available surface stone, and provided a crossing on the river at a shallow point for local residents. Such was the importance of river crossings like Cobbledick's Ford that by 1872, locals were still said to take a detour of three miles to use it, rather than the Exford Bridge, as it offered better access to the established roads leading to Melbourne.[89]

By the 1860s, it had become clear that a road board was necessary for the provision of roads of a better quality than the worn tracks that had been forged in the district. Floods had wreaked havoc on the roads and river crossings in 1862, almost completely washing away access to bridges around Werribee, leaving various portions of the road dangerous and impassable. The rising popularity of the region, partially owing to the railway, had also meant that the roads were becoming gradually unfit for use by increasing traffic. Writing to the Argus in September of 1862, one concerned resident wrote:

> Some months since the inhabitants of this district forwarded a petition to the proper quarter praying for the formation of a road board, to be called the Wyndham Road Board … yet nothing has been done that we can hear of to our satisfaction.
>
> The late heavy floods coming down the Werribee have made the approaches to the bridge across that river at Wyndham almost impassable, and are now in a highly dangerous state. What will the G–vernment do – Will they repair our bridge, or will they give us a road board? The bridge is not the only part that requires repairs, although the most urgent, as the greater part of the road between here and the Kororoit Creek needs repair, as it will now be used more frequently, thanks to the management (or, I should say, mismanagement) of the Railway Department.[90]

Notwithstanding these issues, the earliest residential streets within Wyndham township were laid out and named by the 1860s, on both sides of the river.[91]

Roads through the district were somewhat affected by the rise in large private landholdings, particularly the holdings of the Chirnside families. Access to public roads was enveloped into the land holdings, leaving residents and visitors to the region confused, and often frustrated. Werribee and its surrounds became increasingly popular for tourists, often drawn by the opportunities for fishing and shooting, the latter of which was a flashpoint for complaints about access to roads in the area. In 1875, the following was reported:

> To reach the shore, it was necessary to cross the land intervening between the Geelong and Melbourne road and the Bay, nearly the whole of the tract being the freehold of Messrs T. and A. Chirnside. It is said there are three reserved roads running through the estate to the beach, two being on one side of the Werribee and one on the other, but where these roads are is known to very few, if any, of the residents, as the fence has been continued along the Geelong-road without anything to indicate the points at which the reserved roads should branch off, and the side lines are totally unmarked. The holiday sportsmen and others living in the vicinity were therefore compelled to cross at haphazard, and were met by persons

89 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 21 December 1872, p. 3.

90 *Argus*, 29 September 1862, p. 6.

91 James 1985, p. 51.

> employed by Messrs Chirnside, and informed that they must turn back, as they were trespassers. [92]

Access to public roads was to become a cause championed by the residents of the district, many of whom believed that the dominance of the large land-owning families over public roadways, principally the Chirnsides, was detrimental to the interests of the town. The movement against the closure of public roads by the big landowners was championed by Patrick Kelly, who presided over the Wyndham Ratepayers Association.[93] The local newspaper further reported:

At a public meeting held on Saturday evening, at the Camp Hotel, a Wyndham Shi'e Ratepayers' Association was formed, the object being to enforce the right of the public to the use of the roads. The subscription was fixed at £1 and upwards per annum, and a committee was appointed who were instructed to provide for the defence of any who may be prosecuted for the late so-called trespass. The meeting was almost unanimous, the only persons who did not vote for the resolutions being Mr Stewart, president of Wyndham shire, and Mr Nolan, the shire secretary.[94]

The construction of bridges across the Werribee River and Little River was integral to the district's transport and communication network. The establishment of local government in the 1860s and resulting extension and improvement of roads meant that many of the small fords or rudimentary bridges began to be replaced, particularly in places where the size of the rivers made them impassable. The plentiful local bluestone provided a useful resource for the construction of bridges, and by the 1860s multiple stone arch bridges had been constructed over both rivers.

Figure 24 The Sayers Road Bridge following a flood in 1919, where the western approach was washed away. Many of the river crossings and roads in the district were routinely affected by flooding on both the Little River and Werribee River.
Source: Werribee & District Historical Society

92 *Gippsland Times*, 8 April 1875, p. 4.

93 'Kelly Park, Cherry Street (corner Princes Highway), Werribee', Wyndham History website.

94 *Gippsland Times*, 8 April 1875, p. 4.

Figure 25 Rothwell Bridge, Little River, constructed 1888, replacing the first bridge of 1866. Source: Werribee District Historical Society

Tenders were called in 1849 for the construction of one of the first permanent bridges across the Werribee River.[95] Contractor James Wilson was appointed to construct this bridge in April 1850.[96] Such was the importance of river crossings to the development of the area, that the bridge's location was tied with the survey of the Wyndham township, with the *Geelong Advertiser* noting in September 1849:

> The site for a bridge across the Werribee [River] has been marked out, nearly mid-way between Wedge's and Greeve's stations, by Mr Lennox [superintendent David Lennox], and we presume the work of its construction will shortly commence. Blocks of land are to be measured off and loud out on either side of the bridge for a village … [97]

The bridge can be seen in an 1852 plan of the proposed railway line between Melbourne and Geelong (Figure 26).[98]

95 *Argus*, 17 December 1849, p. 4.

96 *Argus*, 10 April 1850, p. 4.

97 *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 September 1849, p. 2.

98 1852 plan identified by Werribee District Historical Society.

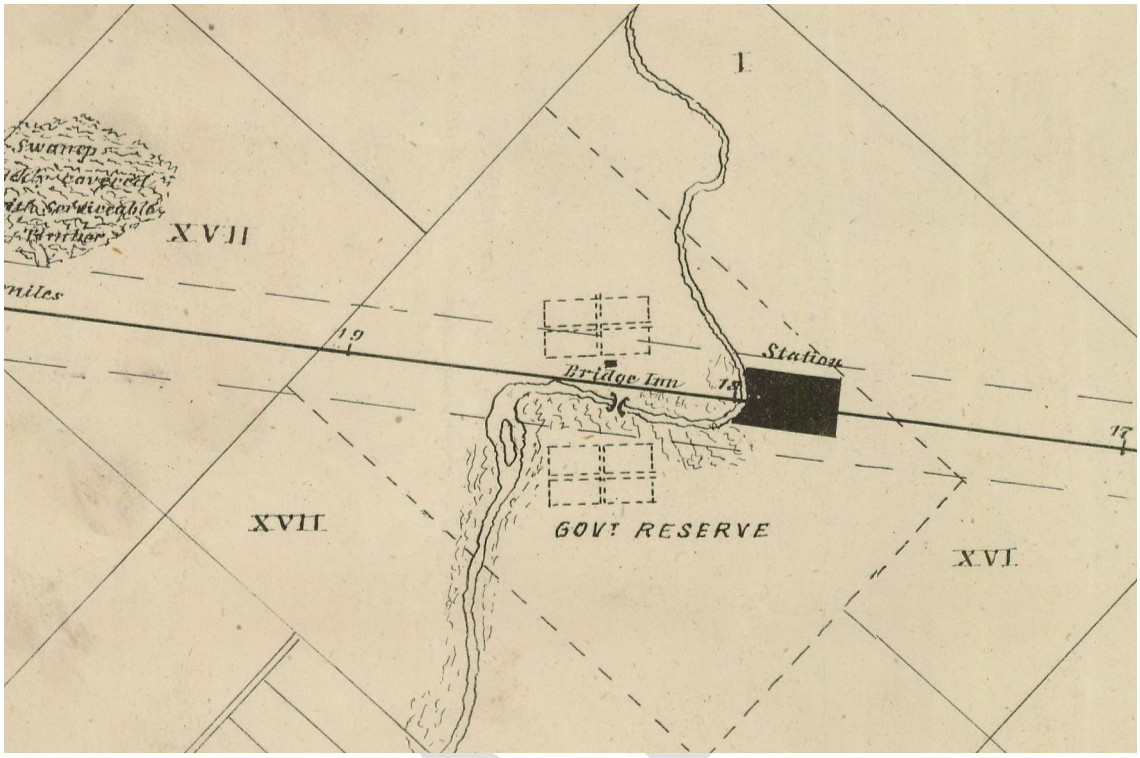

Figure 26 Map of proposed railway line between Melbourne and Geelong, showing rail and road crossings of the Werribee River
Source: Edward Snell, held by State Library of Victoria

In 1856, the first railway bridge over Werribee River was built, rebuilt in the late 1880s with an attached footbridge, which had been lobbied for by the local community.[99]

The road bridge was replaced in the mid-1850s. Destroyed again by flooding in 1861, a third bridge was built in 1875 at a greater height and strength to withstand the force of the river in flood times.[100] Floods would remain an issue in the following decades, washing away parts of this bridge, and others, in the 1890s and 1910s. The local council spent the remainder of the nineteenth century building further crossings at other locations to supplement the bridges closer to Werribee. Other important river crossings were built with better luck elsewhere in the municipality, like the Little River Railway Viaduct in 1857, and Rothwell Bridge on the Old Melbourne Road at Little River, which was finished in 1866 at a cost of £800. This bridge was later rebuilt in the 1880s using original stone, after flooding caused extensive damage in 1880.[101] The Grant Bridge further along the River at You Yangs Road was finished a year later.[102]

Transport requirements influenced the services on offer in the early towns and settlements. Werribee offered blacksmiths and wheelwrights, as well as saddlers, vets and grain merchants. Watering the

99 *Argus*, 11 May 1887, p. 7 and Bacchus *Marsh Express*, 25 February 1888, p. 3.

100 *Werribee Shire Banner* 22 July 1987, p. 3.

101 'H1454 Rothwell Bridge', Victorian Heritage Register citation, Victorian Heritage Database, https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/1000, accessed 9 August 2023.

102 Context 1997, 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham Study'. (ROTHWELL BRDG and GRANT BRDGE)

horses was essential along the major transport routes and horse troughs were typically supplied outside hotels. A more indirect link with the transport theme in Wyndham was through cropping. Lucerne hay and oats were the major crops for horse-feed and the irrigation areas in Werribee were a significant producer of these crops which provided the necessary fuel for thousands of horses in Melbourne.

Figure 27 The A.R. Bell Livery Stables and Motor Garage at 28 Watton Street, Werribee, c. 1920s. Due to the rise in use of motor vehicles, many businesses adapted to cater for both the traditional horse-drawn and modern motor vehicles.
Source: Flickr

The arrival of motor cars around the turn of the century saw further necessary changes to roads in the municipality. The demands of motor cars — namely the need for safe road surfaces — meant that roads were gradually improved. Cars were initially restricted to the wealthy, and quickly became popular as a form of sport. Captain Percy Chirnside had participated in a race from Melbourne to Carlsruhe in 1905 in his own Packard.[103] Over time, the roads saw growing traffic from those driving between Melbourne and Geelong and the Western District. In the same year, the Victorian Railways' steam-motor bus carried a deputation of Williamtown town councillors to visit the Metropolitan Farm.[104] By 1908, Werribee Shire Council moved to put the first speed limits in place within the township.

103 James 1985 p. 79.

104 James 1985, p. 80.

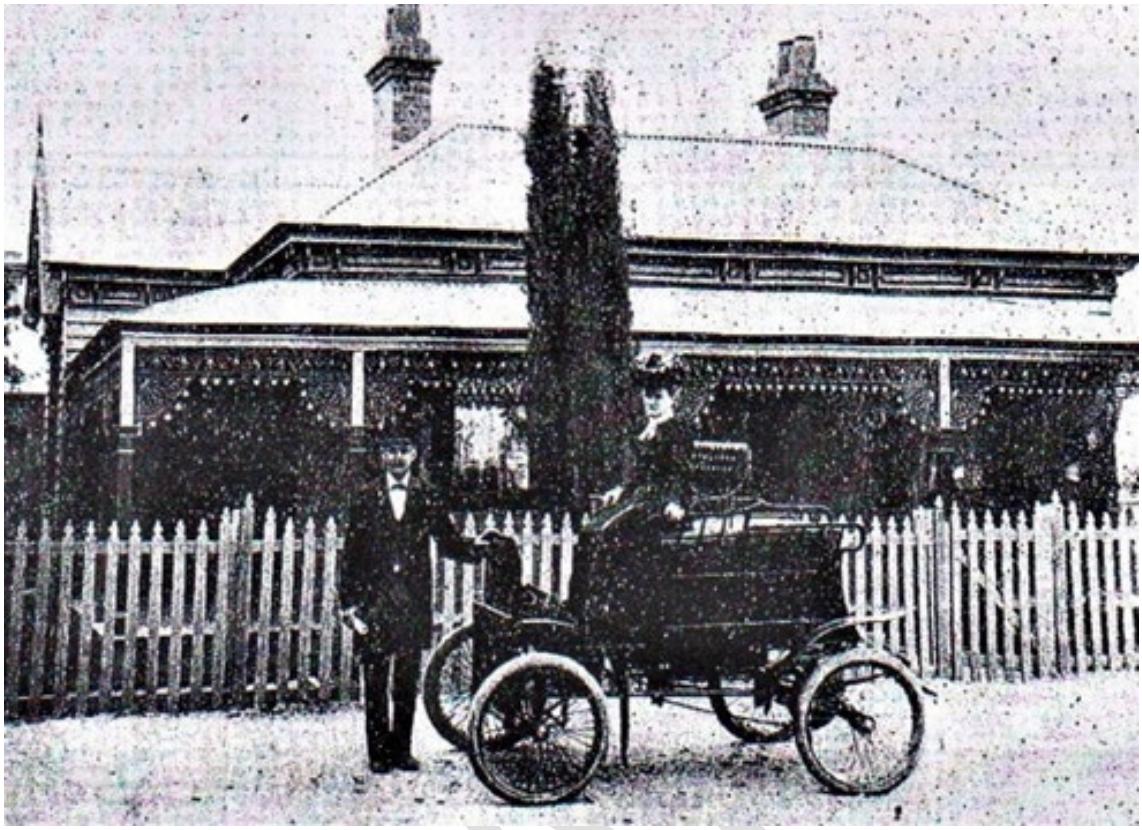

Figure 28 Mr and Mrs Woodcock photographed on Watton Street, Werribee, c. 1905, with their own motor car, which was one of the first in the district.
Source: Werribee District Historical Society Photograph Collection, via Lost Werribee Facebook Group

The Country Roads Board, established in 1913, assumed responsibility for main roads in the area outside metropolitan Melbourne. Roads were metalled and sealed, and generally made safe for motor vehicles. The main road connecting Melbourne to Geelong was named the 'Prince's Highway' and proclaimed in 1920. The introduction of motor cars also brought new dangers. Hopper's Crossing on the Melbourne–Geelong Road proved a notorious place for accidents and the Country Roads Board advised of the installation of the of curiously named 'road light-houses' at this location in 1928.[105] The high frequency of potholes in the roads might was also posed a danger to horse-drawn vehicle, but it was the advent of the motor car and the frequency of road accidents that prompted improvements to the roads to be carried out.

The Country Roads Board built a new reinforced concrete bridge across the Little River in 1920,[106] and widened the bridge over the Werribee River at Werribee in 1935 and again in 1967. The railway bridge over the Werribee River has been rebuilt twice since the initial structure of 1856.[107]

105 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 19 January 1928, p. 5.

106 *Age*, 20 March 1920, p. 14.

107 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 22 July 1987, p. 3.

The increased number of cars on the road, and the importance of the Werribee as a stopping point on a common route to Geelong and the Western District, saw the emergence of motor garages, sales agents and other ancillary transport-related services in Werribee from the 1920s. The Werribee Motor Garage was situated in Cherry Street, while the A.R. Bell Livery Stables and Motor Garage and Nicholson's Bridge Motors were located in Watton Street in the 1920s.[108]

The Princes Highway (or Geelong Road) has been subject to many upgrades and road widenings by the Country Roads Board. The resulting road, thought to 'equal any road in the nation,' included the addition of the Maltby Bypass at Werribee, which when opened in 1961, was the first Victorian road to incorporate road surfaces of 'freeway quality'.[109] The bypass was said to introduce 'a new concept of roading in Victorian [with] no access permitted from side roads or properties fronting' the bypass.[110] Since that time, the whole stretch of road between Melbourne and Geelong has been upgraded to the same level.

Figure 29 Road workers drag spreading in Werribee township, April 1940, showing the Bridge Hotel in the background.
Source: Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 17684, P3, Item 39_00399

108 Wyndham History: http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1310; Werribee District Historical Society website – Photo and text on Bridge Motors.

109 W.K. Anderson 1994, *Roads for the People: A history of Victoria's roads*, Hyland House, Melbourne, p. 74.

110 'Maltby Bypass, Princes Highway, Werribee', Wyndham History, http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1044, accessed 7 August 2023.

7.3 Travelling by water

Goods and people were transported by sea between Melbourne and the Werribee River from the early period of settlement. It was noted by Captain William Hobson in his charting of Port Phillip Bay in 1836 that 'there is one valuable little river … that will admit vessels drawing six feet of water called the Ex [Werribee], at two miles from the entrance'.[111] In the late 1830s Police magistrate Foster Fyans referred to the 'boats on the Werribee River and noted that they were 'constantly passing in that direction from Melbourne and laying in the river for days'.[112]

Travelling to Werribee from Melbourne or Geelong in the late-nineteenth century and into the early 1900s it was common to take the steamer. The roads were slow and uncomfortable for passengers. Passenger steamers, such as the Ozone, visited the Werribee area in the 1890s. The Chirnsides hosted lavish parties at Werribee Park and guests from Melbourne would often attend via a passenger boat.[113]

In the nineteenth century steamers were used for transporting goods. The Chirnsides sometimes made use of the river as an access point to Werribee Park and shipped wool from the river to Melbourne. An early jetty was built in the vicinity of Point Cook by 1861 (it appears on a map of that date). This was possibly associated with the Chirnsides' activities. Another jetty was built here c. 1920s.[114] In 1896 the MMBW pursued their plans to build a jetty at Werribee for the purpose of shipping produce cheaply from the Metropolitan Farm. This plan faced considerable local opposition as it was felt the MMBW should utilise the existing railway connection to Melbourne.[115] The jetty was located to the south of 160 South Road.[116]

7.4 Developing rail networks

Construction of Victoria's first country railway line, providing a connection between Melbourne and Geelong, provided ready access to the area to the west of the city of Melbourne, and to Werribee and Little River. Construction commenced by the Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company in 1854 with the financial backing of British shareholders, the lure of the goldrushes drained the railway construction camps of necessary labour and slowed progress. The line finally commenced operation in 1857 and the first Werribee Railway Station (originally named Wyndham) opened the same year, located to the east of the town centre. The original Werribee Station was significantly damaged by fire in 1927.[117]

The Melbourne–Geelong railway connection was critical to the development of the district in the period before motorised transport, including agriculture in the region. The stations at Werribee and Little River were substantial complexes, each with a large station building and refreshment rooms. They also had

111 Michael Cannon (ed.) 1985, *Historical Records of Victoria vol. 4: Communications, Trade and Transport*, p. 7.

112 Cited in James and Pritchard 2008, p. 114.

113 Burke 2009.

114 MMBW, 'Point Cook Metropolitan Park' (brochure).

115 *Age*, 10 June 1896, p. 6.

116 As can be seen on Ballan, Sunbury, Meredith & Melbourne, Military Survey map, 1917, Commonwealth Section, Imperial General Staff, held by State Library of Victoria.

117 *Herald*, 16 May 1927, p. 1.

goods sheds, an engine shed and water tank. A stone storeroom was built at Werribee station in the late 1850s.[118]

Railway towns like Werribee and Little River had a large volume of traffic and provided water and feed for the teams who stopped here.

Figure 30 Bluestone railway station and engine shed at Little River, constructed in 1864. Source: Winty Calder 1981, *Beyond the View*

Little River suffered a railway disaster in 1884 when a collision occurred at night between two trains, with several people killed as a result. Further collisions, in some cases involving fatalities, occurred at the Little River level crossing in the 1930s.[119]

Railway stations and sidings were built as local needs arose. A railway station was established at the existing Manor siding between Werribee and Little River, after requests from local landowners for a passenger and good station.[120] It was opened in 1914, and operated until the 1970s.[121]

Between 2012 and 2014, the Deer Park – West Werribee railway line was constructed through the north of the municipality, servicing Tarneit and Wyndham Vale.

118 *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 July 1859, p. 3.

119 See, for example, accounts of railway accidents at Little River in 1884, 1930, 1931, and 1933.

120 *Argus*, 14 June 1913, p. 15 and *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 June 1913, p. 3.

121 'Manor Station', Rail Geelong, https://www.railgeelong.com/location/manor/, accessed 20 July 2023.

Figure 31 Werribee Railway Station, c. 1910.
Source: VPRS 12800 P1, H5141, Public Record Office Victoria

7.5 Postal and telegraph services

The first post office in Werribee was operating by 1858 from a general store in Cottrell Street. Richard Heath was appointed the first postmaster in 1868, followed by Frederick Schulze from 1870, and following his death, his widow Metta Schulze was an early postmistress, from 1892.[122] A purpose-built post office was not built until 1904, at the corner of Watton and Wedge streets (Figure 32). This building was demolished in 1966.[123]

A post office and telegraph station was built at Little River in 1858, probably necessitated by it also being a railway station.[124] In 1895 and possibly earlier, the postmaster at Little River was also the local stationmaster. In 1907 a deputation from the Corio and Wyndham Shire Councils, as well as a group of residents proposed the removal of the post office from the Little River railway station to another site. In 1908, without consulting the residents, the postal department relocated postal services to a local store.[125]

122 'History Topics - First General Store & Post Office', Werribee District Historical Society, https://www.werribeehistory.org.au/historytopicsresearch, accessed 9 August 2023. .

123 Murray 1974, p. 18.

124 Geoff Hocking, 'Little River', Wyndham History, www.wyndhamhistory.net.au; *Statistics of the Colony of Victoria … 1858, VPP*, 1859, p. 70.

125 *Geelong Advertiser*, 22 January 1908, p. 4

A post office operated at Truganina from 1878 and at Tarneit from 1888, where the local schoolmaster was also the postmaster. After closing in 1895, the Tarneit post office reopened in 1902 before closing again in 1943.[126]

Figure 32 Werribee Post Office, c. 1904 (demolished 1966)
Source: ID 5950940, B5919, 15/198, National Archives of Australia

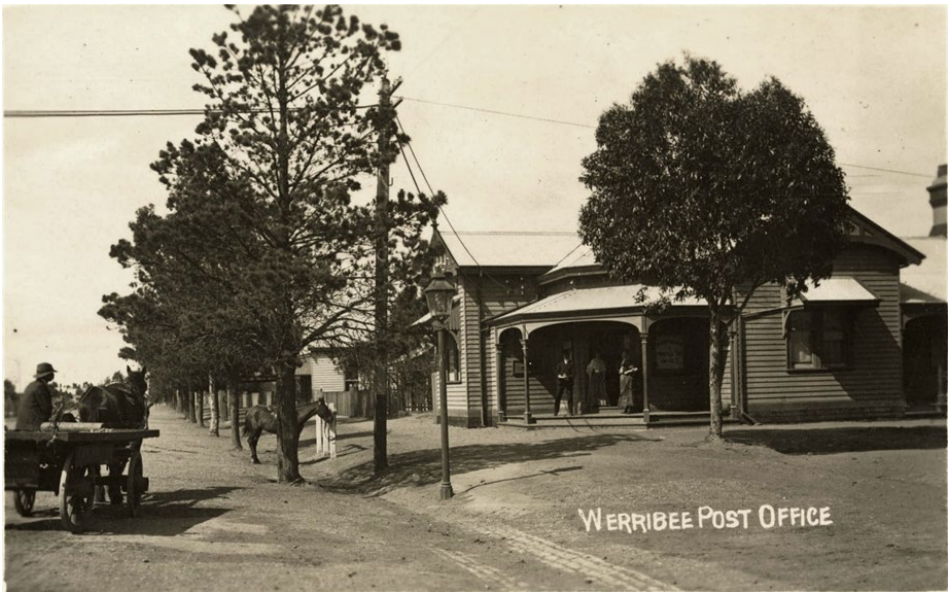

Figure 33 Werribee Post Office, built on the corner of Watton and Wedge streets, in 1904; photographed in 1911. The street tree appears to be a Radiata Pine.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession No. H96.200/1474

126 Context Pty Ltd 2012, 'Historic Heritage Assessment: Tarneit PSP Area 91', p. 14; VMD 1895, p. 624.

New postal services were also offered in areas where new settlements emerged. A post office was erected in Cocoroc in January 1901, servicing those who lived and worked at the Metropolitan Farm. The town of Cocoroc was gradually depopulated and dismantled in the early 1970s, and the post office ceased operating in 1973.[127]

The first telephone office was opened at the Werribee Railway Station in 1897 and calls to Melbourne could be made at a charge of a sixpence.[128] A purpose-built telephone exchange was erected c. 1901. The Little River Progress Association moved to have an all-night telephone service installed in 1925.[129] A telephone exchange was also established at Werribee South by the 1940s.

7.6 Newspapers

Werribee's first local paper, the *Werribee Express*, was established in 1896 and operated until the end of 1936. A second newspaper, the *Wyndham Shire Banner*, was established in 1902 by proprietor Henry Barnes.[130] The paper was renamed the *Werribee Shire Banner* in 1911, reflecting the earlier name change of the town from Wyndham to Werribee. Its name was changed again to the *Werribee Banner* in 1984 and continued until the paper folded in 1984. It is not known whether there are any surviving places associated with the development of newspapers in the municipality. Another local paper, the *Werribee Leader Community News*, was established more recently.

Figure 34 The office of the Werribee Shire Banner.
Source: Werribee District Historical Society

127 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 7 February 1973, p. 1; Baragwanath and James 2015, p. 612.

128 '1897 – Telephone Office opened at Werribee Railway Station', Wyndham History, www.wyndhamhistory.net.au; Herald, 18 May 1898, p. 4.

129 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 1 October 1925, p. 6.

130 '1902–Henry Barnes publishes the first local newspaper, the Wyndham Shire Banner', Wyndham History, www.wyndhamhistory.net.au.

8.0 LIVING OFF THE LAND AND SEA

Places related to this theme include:

- Grahams Dairy, Werribee South (HO50)
- Evans House (former farmhouse), Truganina (HO11)
- Market gardens, Werribee South
- Mouyong shearing shed and drystone walls, Little River (HO53)

8.1 Farming area

Declared a 'settled area' from 1847, Werribee was an important early farming district that benefitted by the close proximity to Melbourne and the established rail connection.[131] Small farms were available from the 1850s, which was earlier than many other areas of Victoria, which only provided small block for farming following the selections acts of the 1860s. A range of farming pursuits were carried out farms in the district, including cropping and grazing, or a mixture of other agricultural pursuits such as poultry farming, dairying or raising pigs.

The access to river frontages and to Melbourne and Geelong markets that the railway lines gave Little River established it as an early farming district. However, farmers faced a number of challenges in this early period, as *The Age* reported in 1861:

> Of fine land and generally fair cultivation we saw much; but of fine farms few, the majority of them being smaller than farms out to be; hence the necessity for commons … The reserve for the township of Rothwell [Little River] is tenanted by a numerous herd of dairy cows and horses [the Little River farmers are] contributors of dairy produce to Melbourne … as long as numerous small holdings exist, commons will be a necessity … [132]

A decade later, farming at Little River 'continue[d] to do well', including crops of carrots, parsnip and mangold.[133]

8.2 Sheep and cattle

Pastoralism, as discussed earlier, shaped the early British settlement in the district, with both sheep and cattle grazed across vast areas by settlers with substantial capital to obtain stock. Pastoral licence fees were negligible in the 1830s and 1840s, but the costs of labour and stock, and the risks of failure were significant. After difficult years in the early 1840s, when stock prices fell and many squatters abandoned their runs, pastoralists began to prosper. In 1847 squatters gained the right to claim a pre-emptive block of 640 acres, which saw the establishment of permanent homesteads and other improvements being made. By the early 1850s, Edward Wedge erected a homestead on the Werribee, as did William Drayton Taylor (or subsequent leaseholder Alexander Irvine) at Point Cook.[134]

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131 May 1989, chapter 4.

132 *Age,* 29 October 1861, p. 7.

133 *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 September 1871, p. 3.

134 'Point Cook Homestead, Point Cook Homestead Road, Point Cook', Wyndham History website, http://wyndhamhistory.net.au/.

The principal landowners in the district in the 1850s and 1860s were the Chirnside brothers and W.J.T. Clarke, along with Simon Staughton, William Cherry and Alfred Langhorne. Sheep were particularly lucrative owing to good prices for wool in export markets; by the 1870s, pastoralists were profiting from a boom in wool prices. Small holders ran smaller herds but many of the small farms were too small to be profitable in themselves. Additional grazing land was made available to farmers through the provision of farmers' commons in the early 1860s. Some farmers managed to increase their capacity by consolidating a number of smaller blocks to make grazing viable, but the dominance of the Chirnsides was difficult to compete with.

Grazing declined somewhat as other agricultural pursuits took hold — notably the shift to wheat-growing at Werribee Park in the 1880s, and other newer pursuits introduced with closer settlement and irrigation. Grazing continued to dominate the areas to the north and west, with wool-growing and fat lambs continuing to be an important to the local economy.

Figure 35 Shearers and rouseabouts at Werribee Park, grouped in front of the shearing shed, 1904. Source: *Weekly Times*, 12 November 1904, p. 10

8.3 Grain-growing

Grain-growing, or cropping, was a significant farming activity in the mid-nineteenth century, with hay-growing presiding over wheat-growing. There was an increased demand for wheat in the 1850s with the high rate of immigration and expanding population, but wheat crops were beset with various challenges, including rust and pests. From the 1880s onwards, however, improved strains of wheat were developed that encouraged more growers and harvesting techniques were also being constantly improved.

The predominant crop in the Werribee district was hay, as well as oats and barley. The introduction of a tenant farming scheme at Werribee Park in 1888, and later at The Manor, saw land use on the Chirnside estates shift from grazing to more intensive cropping, mainly barley and oats. Tenants on the MMBW's Metropolitan Farm were also growing crops from the 1890s.[135]

135 'Shaw House', Wyndham History, http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/282.

Little River was well suited to grain-growing, and for many decades supplied hay and barley to MelbourneA number of farms were important local grain producers, including Mouyong, The Rises, Rockleigh and Tarcombe.[136] Frank Shaw, a longtime Little River resident, who grew up in the district in the early twentieth century, recalled the grain harvests:

> Little River was one of the biggest growers of farm produce between Melbourne and Geelong. At harvest time the whole district was a hive of activity.

Shaw also observed that the harvest season created high levels of employment for the district's workers.[137]

8.4 Dairying

Early settlers had some success in dairy farming where they had access to water. Many early settlers developed viable diaries, which often incorporated butter and cheese-making facilities. Leakes Dairy in Truganina, for example, milked over 100 cows in the 1850s-60s, made cheese and butter, and exported dairy produce overseas.[138]

The establishment of dairy co-operatives in the 1890s allowed local farmers to come together to sell their milk for an agreed price, and this worked well to satisfy supply and demand. In the early 1890s, the tenants on Werribee Park Estate sought to establish such a co-operative, however as tenants they were reliant on a private butter factory established by the Chirnside family in 1893. This was backed by the necessary capital needed to acquire the equipment needed, which provided an alternative model to the emerging diary co-operatives that were established across Victoria in the 1890s.[139] The Werribee Park butter factory did well nevertheless and exported significant quantities of butter to England in 1897.[140]

Dairying became a more viable pursuit for local farmers following closer settlement, especially where irrigation was available. There were a number of private dairies established on closer settlement blocks, including Fowlers cheese-making operation at Werribee South. The Werribee Settlers Dairying Co-operative Co. Ltd was established in c. 1920 in the wake of closer settlement in the district and operated from a disused factory in Station Street. They sold their factory to the Federal Milk Company in 1924. The Federal Milk Company, which was established in Bacchus Marsh and other dairying districts in Victoria, erected a large modern factory on a property adjoining the railway at the northern end of the Werribee township in 1924 to produce milk by-products. In 1925, the factory was manufacturing a product range that included pasteurised cream, concentrated milk, condensed milk, evaporated milk, life cream and powdered milk (both roller dried and spray dried). The evaporated milk was known as 'Crusader Milk' and used almost exclusively by the Australian Navy.[141] The plant closed in 1932.[142]

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136 'Shaw House', Wyndham History.

137 Frank Shaw, *Little River – A Place to Remember*, Hamilton Printing Works, Little River Historical Society, reprinted 2014, pp. 25-26,

138 Leakes Dairy, (Rosegrange), Sayers Road, Truganina, http://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1017

139 Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/groups/799686@N21/discuss/72157638029665286/

140 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 13 March 1897, p. 3.

141 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 9 April 1925, p. 4.

142 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 24 March 1932, p. 4.

By 1935, with the success of the Werribee Irrigation Scheme, there were 100 farmers in Werribee South who sought to supply milk to the Werribee Settlers Dairying Co-Operative. The Werribee Settlers Dairying Co-operative built a new factory of brick and steel on the Geelong Road in 1935 at a cost of £11,000.[143]

During World War II, the Werribee butter factory was one of several country dairy factories permitted to distribute dairy produce to Melbourne.[144] The commercial production of milk, butter and cream was a local operation until the mid-twentieth century.

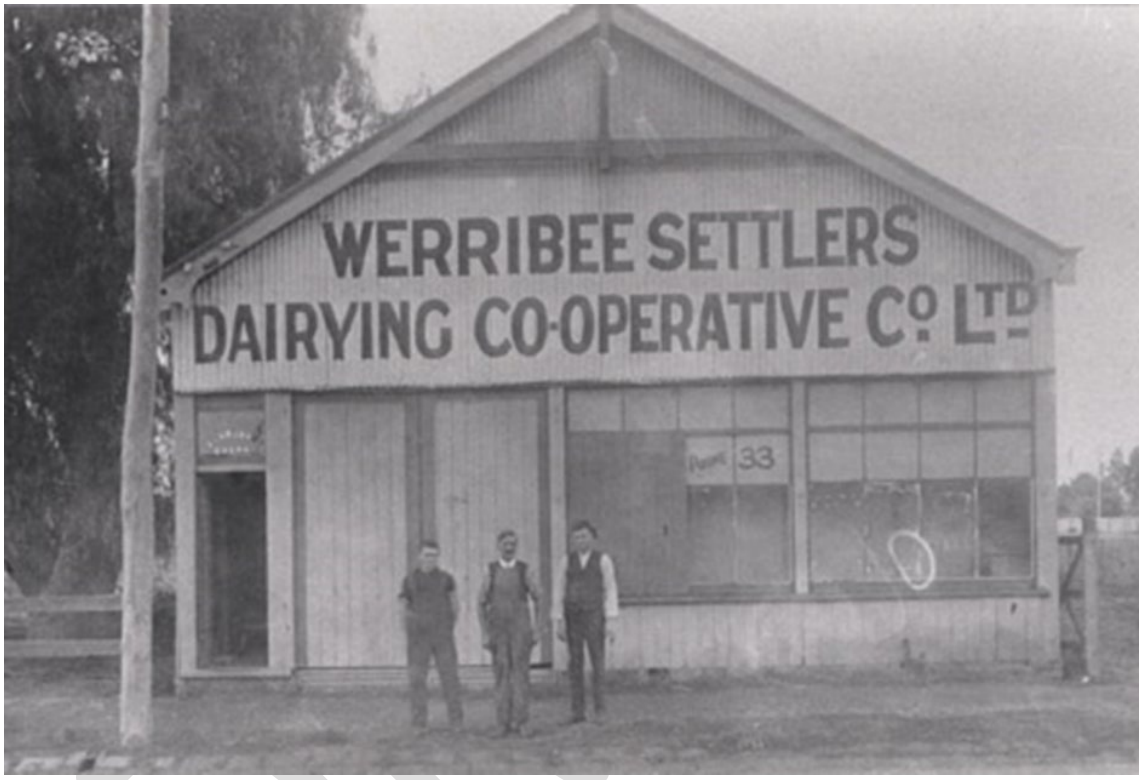

Figure 36 Werribee Settlers Dairying Cooperative, Station Street, Werribee, c. 1920s.
Source: Werribee District Historical Society

8.5 Poultry

The Werribee district proved well suited for poultry producers, on account of the soil type, the availability of feed, and the proximity to Melbourne markets. A number of poultry farms were established in the area including John Robertson's Truganina poultry yards, which was operating by 1890. South of the railway line, Mr W. Cullen ran the Werribee Poultry Farm on an irrigable block on Duncans Road in the 1930s.[145]

143 *Age*, 17 August 1935, p. 16; Werribee Settlers Dairying Co-operative Co. Ltd, http://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1504.

144 Godbold 1989, p. 133.

145 *Leader*, 30 May 1891, p. 16; *Weekly Times*, 14 March 1936, p. 24.

The Carter poultry dynasty began with Walter Carter keeping chickens in the backyard of his parent's house on the Police Paddock estate in Werribee in the 1910s. The business developed into a large-scale operation, extending across 25 acres in Lock Avenue, Werribee; it became the largest poultry farm in the world.[146] Carters also developed a housing estate in Werribee to provide accommodation for their workers.

Figure 37 A series of brick poultry sheds at Carters' Poultry Farm, showing the tram tracks used to transport the feed bins, c. 1940s.
Source: Walter M.S. Carter, *The Carter Family of Werribee*, 1999

8.6 Market gardening and orchards

Suitable soil, access to reliable water supply, and proximity to the growing city of Melbourne also saw the early development of market gardens in the Werribee district in the mid-nineteenth century.[147] These operations would have been established on the riverbank where simple irrigation schemes could be built. It is likely that some of the market gardens were operated by Chinese settlers, who arrived in large numbers in the 1850s and who established themselves as proficient vegetable-growers in many towns across Victoria.

146 *Weekly Times*, 13 January 1940, p. 7

147 There is an early reference to market gardening in the area in 1860; newspaper article, 1860.

The advent of closer settlement and the local irrigation schemes in the early 1900s did much to advance market gardening in the district, especially in Werribee South. Several orchards were operating on the outskirts of Werribee in 1915, including along the Werribee River and east of Werribee in the irrigation area.[148] As well as the irrigation channels, there was other water supply infrastructure associated with these properties. Sheds and cool stories were established for the storage of produce and for machinery.

It was not until the 1920s that market gardening emerged as a major activity in the district. From the 1920s, Italian settlers took up market gardening in the irrigated area of Werribee South. Many took up blocks and proved highly successful. Market gardens would have also had glasshouses or greenhouses for propagation purposes.

After World War II, several small market gardens were established either side of Little River by European migrants.[149]

Figure 38 Bringing in the harvest on the rich soil of a Werribee market garden, c. 1950s.
Source: private collection

148 These are marked on the Imperial Section plan of the area, dated 1915 (State Library Victoria).

149 Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. com, April 2021.

8.7 Fishing and trapping

Rabbits were a significant pest for landowners from around the 1860s, having been released for sport at Barwon Park, Winchelsea, in the 1850s. Rabbit trapping was mostly carried out by itinerant workers and rabbiters. Many rabbiters were sole operators while others worked as contractors for larger companies. There was a solid market in Melbourne for rabbits (both for meat and the skins).[150] The large properties in the district employed rabbiters, either on a regular or occasional basis, taking advantage of the bounty on rabbits. At the Chirnsides' Point Cook homestead there was a designated rabbiter's hut, where traps and other equipment was kept.[151]

Commercial fishing in the waters of Hobsons Bay provided a modest, if sometimes unreliable, income. Fish commonly caught in the area included bream. A timber jetty at the mouth of the Werribee River in Werribee South was erected by the c. 1920s but was rebuilt after 1935.[152] In the 1920s, fishermen erected huts on the Crown land coastal reserve at Baileys Beach and Campbells Cove. By the 1940s, a greater concentration of settlers in Werribee South, through closer (and soldier) settlement, coincided with an increase in commercial fishermen. Amongst these were a number of Italian market gardeners and others who supplemented their income with fishing.[153] Around 20 fishermen were registered in the Werribee area in the c. 1940s-50s.[154] The fishing huts have been added to over time and have possibly come to be used for recreational as well as commercial fishing.

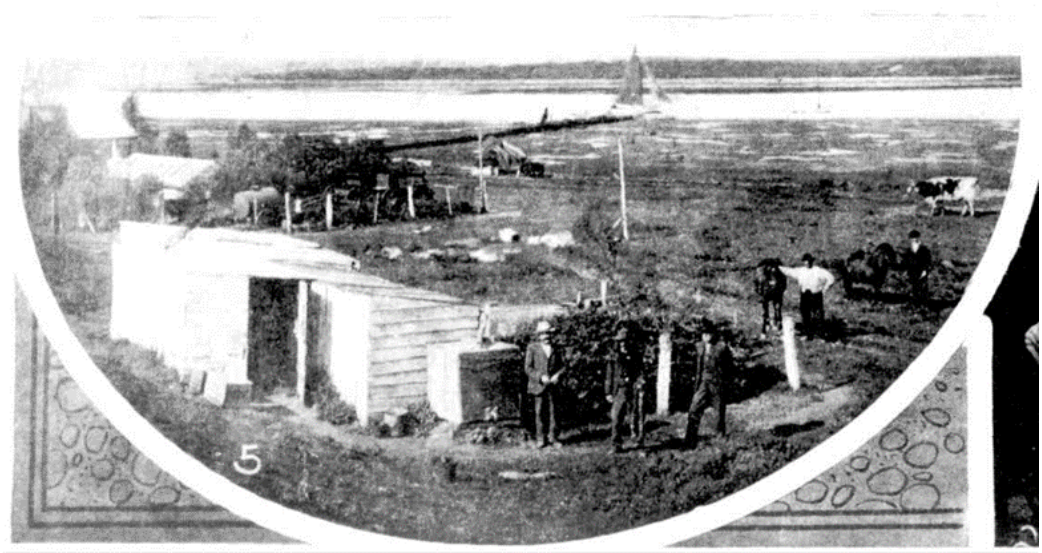

Figure 39 Fisherman's hut near the mouth of the Werribee River, 1904.
Source: *Weekly Times*, 12 November 1904, p. 25

150 Catherine Watson 2012 (first published 1996), *The Rabbit King*, Morning Star Publishing.

151 MMBW 1981, 'Point Cooke'.

152 Werribee Jetty, Vintage Victoria: https://vintagevictoria.net.au/werribee-jetty/

153 'Portelli House and Shop, 650 Diggers Road, Werribee South', Wyndham Heritage, https://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1150

154 McIntyre and McIntyre 1944, *Country Town of Victoria: A social survey*, p. 61.

8.8 Horse-breeding

The breeding of horses was an early pursuit of the Chirnsides at Werribee Park. They kept blood stock and were keen judges of horses. John Robertson ran a successful trotting stud at Truganina in the 1890s and this was continued by McDonald following Robertsons death and the sale of the property in 1905.

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9.0 INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Places related to this theme include:

- Main Outfall Sewer, Hoppers Crossing, Laverton North, Truganina, Werribee, and Williams Landing (HO2)
- Water Tank, Western Treatment Plant, Cocoroc (HO19)
- Water Tower & Office, Werribee (HO100)
- Irrigation channels, Werribee South

9.1 Establishing local water supplies

In the earliest years of settlement, water was drawn directly from the main watercourses for domestic and agricultural use; and stock was watered directly from the river. From the c. 1860s, water reserves were set aside across the Werribee Plains to provide stock with suitable watering places when they were moving through the district.

As settlement increased, farms relied on water tanks for their domestic supply. The district was dry and many landholders resorted to sinking wells to ensure a steady flow of water. Thomas Chirnside sunk his first well in 1862 and sunk a second well, on land sitting between Little River and the Werribee River in 1879. It would appear the early wells were operated with a windmill as the location of an early well appears on a map of the area dated 1863.[155] In 1880, a number of wells were dug at Werribee Park, each with a windmill.[156] Over the following decades, many of the surrounding landholders follow suit.

Water supply for homes and properties during the early period of settlement was initially a private concern. Settlers endeavoured to take up land on the rivers and creeks to secure a reliable natural supply, but this was not always possible. Many of the watercourses were salty, as was the case with the Lower Werribee River, or there was only an intermittent flow, for example with the Skeleton Creek, which reverted seasonally to a chain of lagoons. Settlers sunk private wells on the Werribee Plains — for example at Werribee Park.[157] Tenant farmers who took up blocks at Werribee Park from the late 1880s were provided with water supply either directly from the river or from water tanks.

When the Metropolitan Farm was established in the early 1890s, the Yan Yean (Melbourne) water supply was laid on for its operational purposes. Despite requests for an extension of the water supply to Werribee township, this was not forthcoming, however a tank supplied with Yan Yean water was available for townspeople to draw supplies from. In 1929, the MMBW connected the Melbourne water supply to Werribee.[158]

155 James 1985, p. 27. A windmill is marked on the east side of the Werribee River on the Chirnsides' land in 1863 (from Geological Survey of Victoria, No. 20, 1863, held NLA).

156 *Australasian Sketcher*, 20 March 1880, p. 14.

157 'Little River Seeks Yan Yean', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 6 November 1952, p. 1.

158 James 1985, p. 75; James and Pritchard 2008, p. 65.

Water supply was an intrinsic part of the development of the irrigation scheme for the farming of Werribee South. In 1902, a water tank was installed on Duncans Road, which appears to have been staffed by an attendant selling water supplies each day.[159]

The Little River Water Works Trust was established in the early 1900s and relied on a windmill operation. There was agitation from local residents in the 1930s for a more proficient water supply system. John Rees was a strong advocate for improved water supply at Little River and to improve the flow of the river. A weir was built on the Little River in 1951 and improved water supply for farmers.[160] In 1954 the Little River Development League were agitating for a connection to the Yan Yean water supply.[161] In the 1970s a concrete water tower was constructed in Boadles Lane.

Smaller localities made do with rainwater tanks until sufficient residential development necessitated a mains connection to the Melbourne metropolitan water supply.

Figure 40 Elevated water tanks on what was formerly Werribee Park, probably c 1870s-80s.
Source: private collection

Figure 41 Werribee office of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, 1946.
Source: State Library Victoria, Collection: Rural Water Corporation Collection. Werribee, Accession Number: rwg/1433

9.2 Providing essential services

Sewerage and sanitation

Although the Metropolitan Farm had been constructed to manage Melbourne's sewage in the 1890s, towns in the local area were not provided with sewerage until after World War II as Werribee fell outside of the MMBW boundary of metropolitan Melbourne. Prior to the introduction of proper

159 Bacchus Marsh Express, 6 December 1902, p. 3, via R Harrigan, Werribee District Historical Society.

160 Sue and Peter Jones, Little River, pers. com, November 2020.

161 James 1985, p. xx.

sewerage, residents in the district relied on a pan system and nightsoil men to remove their waste, and farmers relied on septic tanks.

Efforts were made towards providing the region with sewerage by the 1930s, and again in the 1950s when the Council began an enquiry into the provision of sewerage.[162] Work on obtaining the funding for a sewerage scheme was being undertaken in earnest in 1952, when Werribee, along with five other councils, sought £2 million from the Premier of Victoria to carry out a four-year plan.[163] Later that year, the councils turned to the federal government for funding as well.[164] Although work was commenced in the following years, the municipality wasn't fully sewered until the early 1960s.[165]

From the 1970s, government regulations meant that all new building allotments were required to be sewered prior to construction. These regulations coincided with the growth of newly built housing estates in the municipality, all of which would have been connected to sewerage.

Electricity

Electricity was brought to the township of Werribee in June of 1915, with the opening of the Werribee power house on the corner of Duncans Road and Synnot Street. Powered by a twin-cylinder diesel generator, electricity was provided until 11:30pm on a weeknight and 12:30am on a Saturday, however this was later changed to 10:30pm on weeknights as a cost-saving measure. The town was connected to the State Power Grid in 1923.[166] Prior to the introduction of electricity, Werribee had relied on oil lamps. The power house building was later utilised as an Air Raid Precaution Hall during the Second World War and was subsequently relocated to Truganina as a community hall.

Smaller settlements in the district took far longer to be connected to electricity, with some areas waiting until the 1950s before a permanent connection was available. World War II, and the associated pressure on resources for public works, was likely a deciding factor in the provision of electricity to rural towns. The Little River community had made attempts to obtain an electricity supply since at least 1950, however it was not until July 1951 that the town celebrated their official 'electricity switch-on', marking the occasion with a celebratory ball.[167]

Fire prevention

The Werribee Fire Brigade made do with leased premises and was bestowed with a fire bell in 1915 by George Chirnside. Efforts were being made in the early 1920s to raise funds for a local fire brigade building in Werribee, which would also serve as a venue for the local brass band to practice. A purpose-built fire brigade building was finally erected in 1925.[168] In 1937, the Little River Bush Fire Brigade was established.[169]

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162 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 16 March 1950, p. 2.

163 *Argus*, 28 May 1952, p. 7.

164 *Gippsland Times*, 5 June 1952, p. 2.

165 James 1985, p. 116.

166 James 1985, pp. 71-72.

167 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 20 July 1950, p. 5; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 26 July 1952, p. 1.

168 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 5 July 1923, p. 2; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 11 June 1925, p. 2.

169 Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. comm, April 2021.

Lighting

Gas lighting was provided in the main streets of Werribee by c. 1900. Street lighting was converted to electricity in the 1920s. Street lighting appears to have been undertaken in Little River in the early twentieth century, with the Shire engineer reporting on the appropriateness of installing lamps near the town's churches in 1908.[170]

Drainage

Maintaining the public roads was the responsibility of the local council and drainage was an element of that work. Early photographs of central Werribee depict what looks like brick lined channels in the main streets.

9.3 Building irrigation schemes

Following years of crushing droughts of the 1880s, which impacted agricultural production in Victoria, the colonial government began investigating the viability of introducing irrigation schemes to provide a level of stability to farming. Alfred Deakin, later the prime minister of Australia, was appointed as the Chairman of Royal Commission on Water Supply, and undertook overseas research trips. He met the Canadian Chaffey Brothers in America, a meeting which would establish a number of irrigation schemes in Victoria, including along the Murray River and in Wyndham, to varying degrees of success.[171]

The Werribee Water Supply and Irrigation Trust was established in 1888 pursuant to the Irrigation Act of 1886, which enabled local areas to develop and attract government funding for water supply and irrigation systems. The Trust was formed by a syndicate, the Werribee Irrigation and Investment Co. Ltd, under the directorship of George Chaffey, which purchased 1468 acres of land on the east side of the Werribee River in the parish of Tarneit. This comprised 4 miles of river frontage and river flats.[172] Plans were drawn up for the irrigation scheme in the late 1880s by the Chaffey brothers, who had pioneered irrigation in Mildura. Drawing water from the river and pumping it through a network of channels, it was proposed to form an 'irrigation colony' that would convert the Werribee Plains into 'a rich productive and evergreen oasis'.[173] Promoted as 'a Mildura in the Metropolitan area', in closer proximity to Melbourne, the Werribee scheme followed a similar, though much smaller, model as that devised by the Chaffey brothers for Mildura. The township centre of their irrigation colony was to be called 'Chirnside', after district's most prominent landowners (Figure 42).[174]

George Chaffey settled in Werribee in c. 1888 to manage the proposed Werribee Irrigation Colony, and built a flamboyant Californian-style, double-storey residence in 1889-90, Quantin Binnah (Figure 43) that was painted pink.[175] The scheme relied on the investment confidence of Melbourne businessmen, but with the collapse of the land boom in the early 1890s plans for the Werribee Irrigation Colony were

170 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 6 June 1908, p. 4.

171 'Defining Moments in Australian History: Large scale irrigation begins', *Australian Geographic*, 15 December 2022, accessed via australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2022/12/defining-moments-in-australian-history-large-scale-irrigation-begins/. 4 September 2023.

172 *Age*, 3 December 1888, p. 4; *VMD* 1895, p. 74.

173 *Portland Guardian*, 30 November 1888, p. 3.

174 *Australasian*, 27 July 1889, p. 14.

175 *Geelong Advertiser*, 15 January 1890, p. 4.

abandoned. There had also been an ongoing and unresolved problem with corrosion in the boiler tubes.[176]

Following the failure of the Chaffey scheme, the Werribee Irrigation and Water Supply Trust pursued its plans to develop an irrigation scheme, namely: 'The construction of a weir across Werribee river; pumping plant adjoining weir site to pump water into a head channel for conveyance to proposed Irrigation and Water Supply District, over which water will be distributed by means of a reticulation system.'[177] Surviving elements of this early developments in irrigation include Riverbend Historical Park (HO61), which includes a domed well and remnant trees.

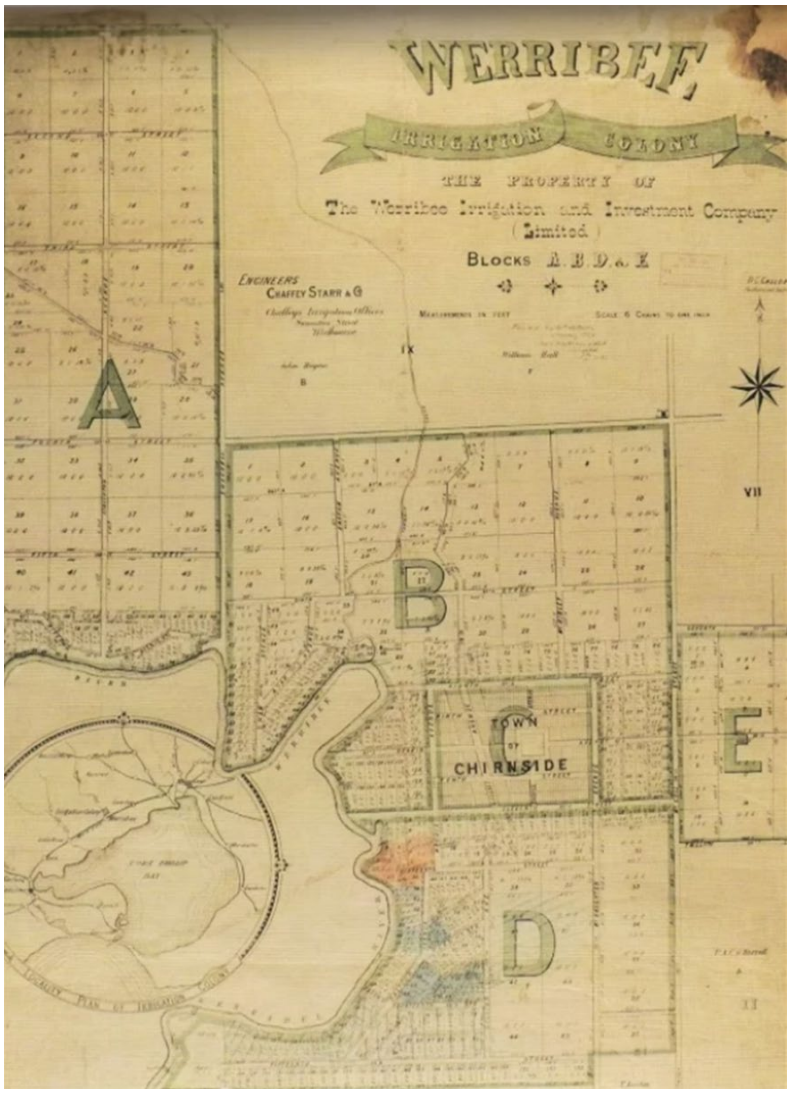

Figure 42 Plan of the Werribee Irrigation Settlement and the proposed Town of Chirnside, c. 1888, devised by George Chaffey, American irrigationist.
Source: https://www.xmauboy.com/7-the-chaffey-brothers

176 James and Pritchard 2008, p. 58.

177 *VMD* 1895, p. 75.

Figure 43 Quantin Binnah, the Werribee home of George Chaffey, built c. 1888-89 Source: Werribee District Historical Society)

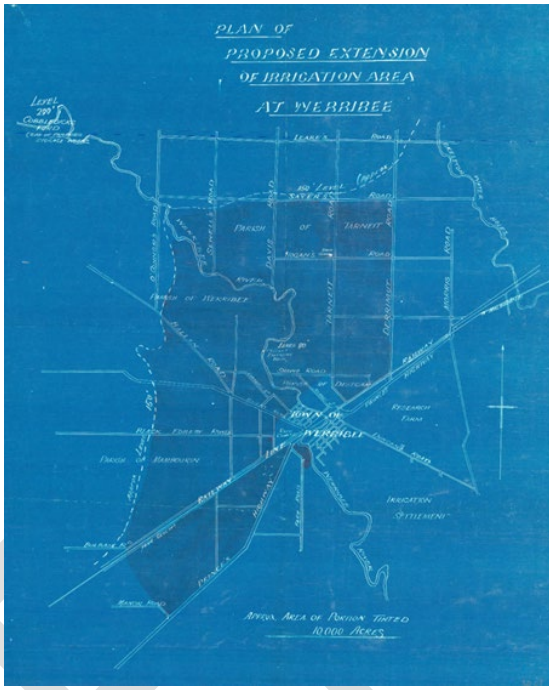

Figure 44 Proposed extension to Werribee irrigation area, c. 1900. Source: State Library Victoria

The Federation-era drought of 1895 to 1902 saw the Werribee River at low levels and highlighted the need for an improved water supply for irrigation purposes. The *Water Act* of 1906 resulted in the creation of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWSC) in 1906.[178] The Werribee irrigation scheme was acquired by the Closer Settlement Board and was managed by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission from 1905. The office of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was initially accommodated in the former Werribee Shire Hall until the office was relocated to the water reserve in Tower Road, Werribee, in 1926, where a new office was erected.[179]

Sometimes referred to as the 'Duncan's Road Irrigation Settlement', the Werribee Irrigation Scheme area covered an area of 8000 acres between Duncans Road and the Werribee River, and between the mouth of the river and the Werribee railway station. Properties were irrigated via a network of channels. The water was fed from both the Werribee River and from two other sources to the north — the channel of the Werribee River at Melton (the reservoir was under construction in 1915) and the channel of Pykes Creek, a tributary of the Werribee River. The Werribee Diversion Weir was constructed in 1909, and the following year tenders were called for the construction of 4 miles of channels near Werribee township, which involved excavation and subsidiary works.[180] The Melton Reservoir was built

178 Context 2007, 'Victorian Water Supply Heritage Study: Vol. 2 Thematic history'. Prepared for Heritage Victoria and Melbourne Water, pp. 35-36.

179 *VGG*, 2 June 1926, p. 1724.

180 *Argus*, 28 January 1910, p. 4.

between 1913 and 1916, primarily to assist in the irrigation of Werribee.[181] The damming also eased the flooding experienced further downstream, although floods continued to occur in the years after its completion. The Werribee Diversion Weir (HO3) was associated with the irrigation scheme.

By 1915, 6800 acres of the Chirnside Werribee Estate had been acquired by the government and subdivided into small farm allotments, which were taken up as leases under the various land selection Acts. The estate was used for the growing of fruit and market gardens, cropping, and was also for fattening lambs.[182] Proximity to the Melbourne markets made this a prosperous farming area and the price of land and water was greater in the Werribee Irrigation Estate than other irrigation areas.[183]

In 1917, a scheme was proposed for the Werribee Water Supply and Irrigation District. This involved a number of reservoirs on the Werribee River and its tributaries and a diversion weir near Werribee, as well as 'a system of main and distributary channels, and appurtenant works', with the estimated cost of the work at £125,000.[184] The channels were raised and concreted in the mid-1920s to reduce absorption and improve efficiency.[185] While initially the irrigation settlement was largely occupied with growing lucerne, there was a subsequent shift to preparing pastures for dairying. By the mid-1930s, it was reported that the settlement is becoming 'a vast market garden worked by Italians and providing Melbourne with vegetables'.[186]

The Werribee irrigation district remained a highly productive area for many decades. The embankment of Melton Reservoir was raised in 1937, and further upgrade works were undertaken between 1988 and 1994, further reducing the river's ability to flood.[187] The Closer Settlement Board was wound up in 1938. Some channels are no longer used and some have been removed.

181 Southern Rural Water, Melton Reservoir, www.srw.com.au.

182 *Irrigation in Victoria, Australia*, 1915, p. 13.

183 *Weekly Times*, 8 December 1928, p. 33.

184 *VGG*, 29 August 1917, p. 2713.

185 *Weekly Times*, 8 December 1928, p. 33.

186 *Age*, 7 March 1935, p. 14.

187 Southern Rural Water, Melton Reservoir, www.srw.com.au.

Figure 45 Harvesting alfalfa on the Werribee Estate, c. 1915.
Source: Irrigation in Victoria, Australia, 1915, p. 12

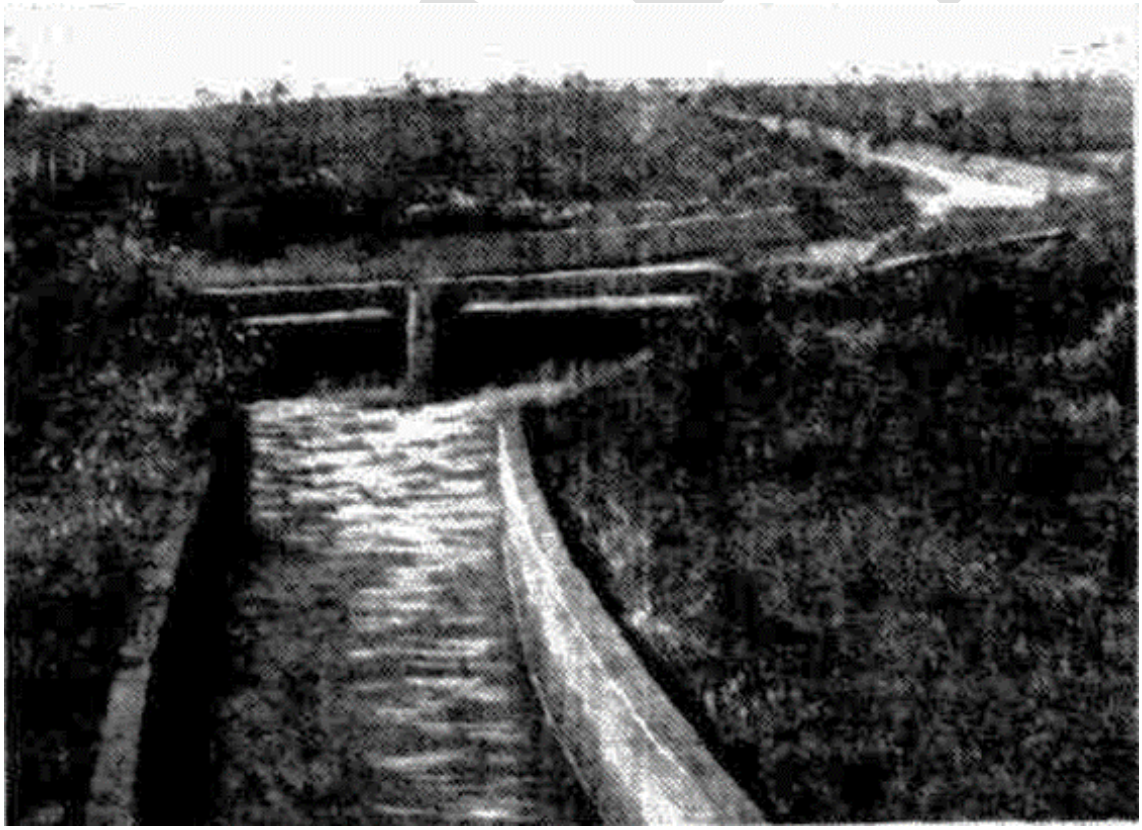

Figure 46 New concrete channel at Werribee
Source: *Weekly Times*, 8 December 1928, p. 33

9.4 Building and operating a metropolitan sewerage scheme

The sewerage treatment works at Werribee, developed to serve metropolitan Melbourne, were designed by the eminent British engineer, James Mansergh. The works occupied a large area of over 8000 acres situated on the south side of the Geelong Road, on land that had been acquired from the Chirnsides and other families, including the descendants of early settler Henry Grass.[188] Initially, the Chirnside family were not in favour of this area of the property being earmarked for a sewerage treatment, pointing out that 'the land was very valuable in itself … its occupation for sewerage purposes would be detrimental to the Mansion and grounds'.[189] Works commenced in 1892, with the first sod turned by the Governor of Victoria, Lord Hopetoun, in 1893. Known colloquially as The Farm, the construction, maintenance and management of the operations provided a significant source of employment for many local people. It is now known as the Western Treatment Plant. The development of the sewerage system was a major engineering achievement, and transformed metropolitan Melbourne, which had been colloquially known as 'smellbourne'.

The Outfall Sewer was a major construction operation and employed a large number of workers. The digging of channels was also an extensive operation, with both horses and steam engines being put to work. The Metropolitan Farm also had its own nursery and much of the early work included extensive tree-planting.[190]

It would appear that there was no other extensive earth filtration sewage treatment plant or comparable size, in operation anywhere in the world at the time the Werribee Sewage Farm was establish'd. Melbourne's sewerage system was not the first in the world, or in Australia. Although it is not the largest system, at the time of the official commencement of its construction in 1892, it was the most comprehensive scheme to be built in a single connected network, and the only one in Australia to completely collect and treat all sewage, without resorting to discharging contaminated effluent to waterways, or the ocean.'[191]

The Sewerage Farm employed a large number of people, performing a range of tasks. Single men were provided with rudimentary housing on the reserve. Many workers lived offsite in Werribee and Little River. The farm provided employment for over 400 people during the 1930s economic depression, and numerous post-war migrants were employed there from the 1950s.[192] Workers were employed by the MMBW, and positions included farm manager, engineers, and irrigation officers.[193] The farm operations included pastured stock (sheep, cattle, horses) as well as crops such as lucerne and maize.[194]

Once the sewerage works were operational, tenant farmers were allocated blocks on the Farm, as it was known. Tenants farmed this land, occupied mostly with cropping but also dairying, until 1914.

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188 *pers. Comm*, Little River Historical Society and Kristien Van den Bossche, Wyndham City Council, 25 October 2022.

189 Cited in Dingle and Rasmussen 1991, p. 53.

190 Penrose 2001, p. 10.

191 'Metropolitan Farm', Register of the National Estate.

192 Fatima Measham, 'No Shit', *Meanjin Quarterly,* Volume 73, Number 2, 2014, via https://meanjin.com.au/essays/no-shit/, accessed 14 August 2023.

193 *Age*, 27 September 1927, p. 11.

194 *Age*, 27 September 1927, p. 11, *Fitzroy City Press*, 6 March 1920, p. 2.

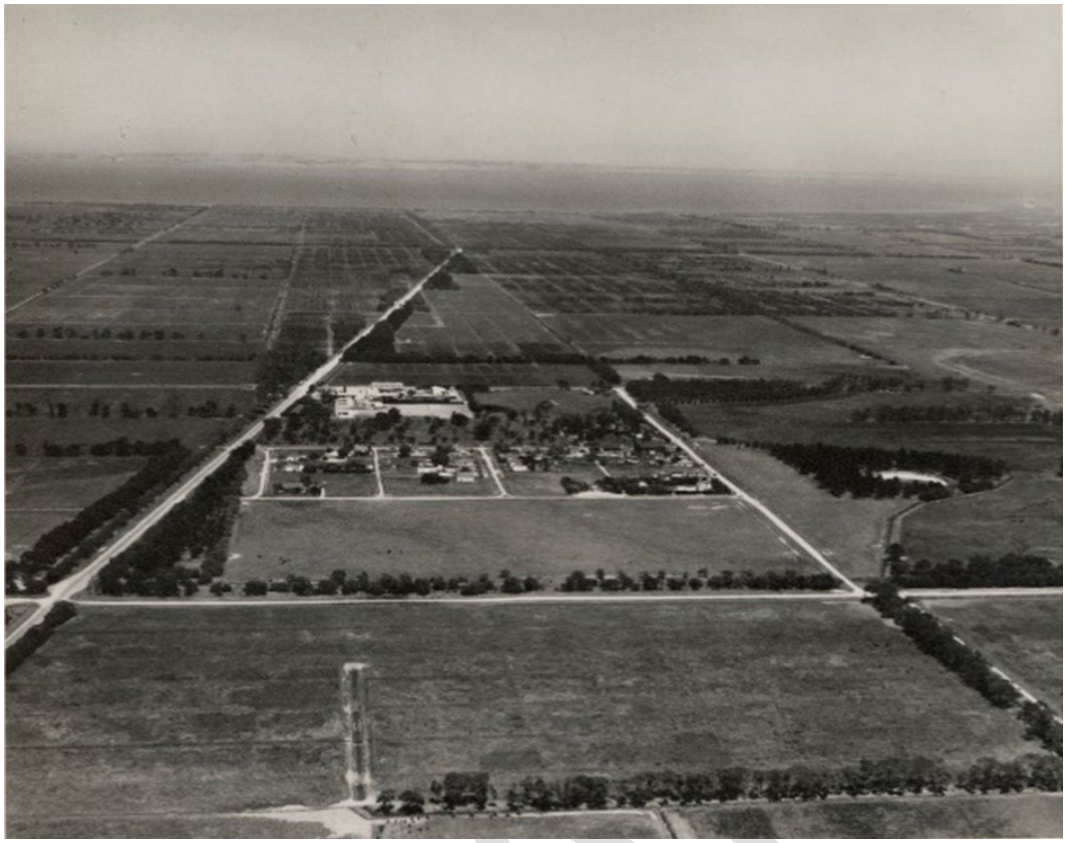

Figure 47 Aerial view of the Metropolitan Farm at Werribee', c. 1920s from Jessop Album MMBW. Source: Public Record Office Victoria

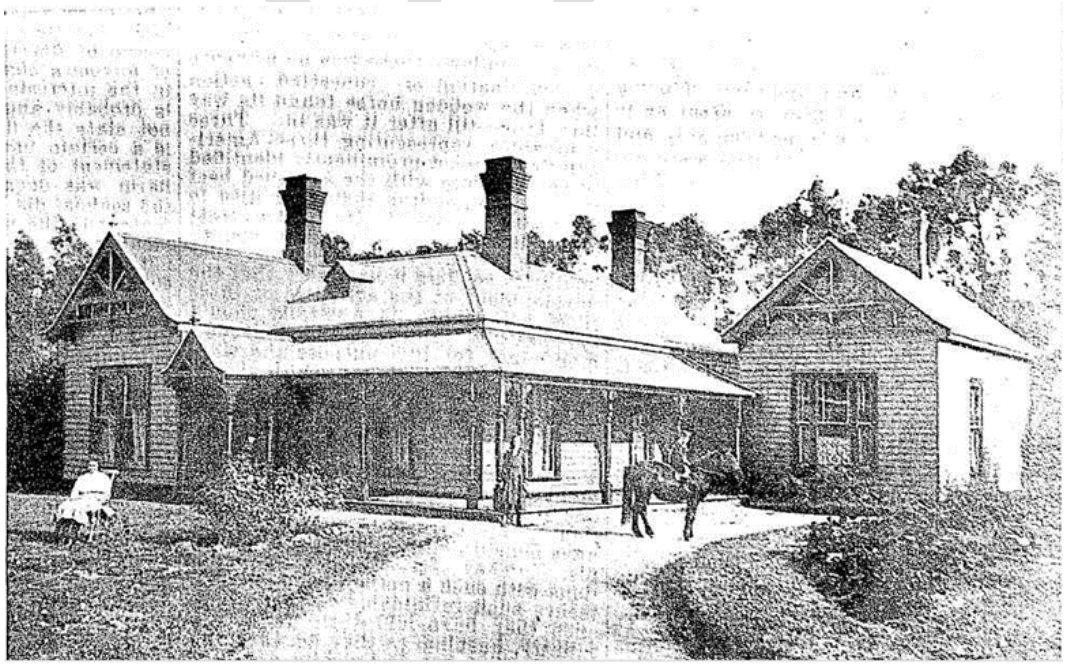

Figure 48 Manager's residence at the Metropolitan Farm, 1914
Source: *Weekly Times*, 12 December 1914, p. 48

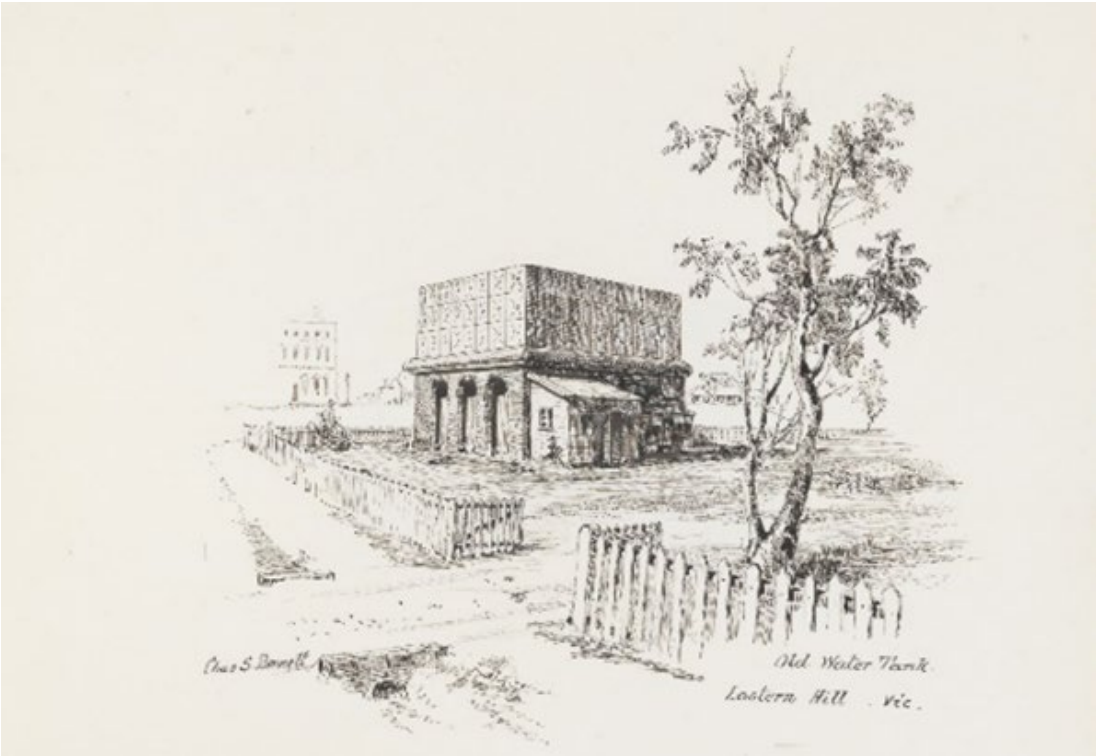

Figure 49 Charles Bennett, 'Old Water Tank, Eastern Hill', c. 1880, before being moved to the Metropolitan Farm, Werribee.
Source: Dixson Library, State Library of NSW, DL PX 50, Number 63

Figure 50 Outfall Sewer, Werribee River Aqueduct, c. 1900s-10s
Source: Gibbs 1925

10.0 BUILDING INDUSTRIES AND EMPLOYMENT

Places related to this theme include:

- Jack Carter's Poutry Farm, Werribee (HO69)
- Fowlers House and Silo, Werribee South (HO49)
- Wyndham Park, former gravel quarry, Werribee
- State Research Farm, Werribee (HO75)

10.1 Processing raw materials

10.1.1 Grain

Grain-growing, particularly hay, was a major occupation in the Werribee district. There were chaff mills and flour mills in the Werribee district from the mid-nineteenth century that processed local grain. More intensive farming accompanied the introduction of tenant farming schemes in the 1890s and the closer settlement schemes in the early 1900s, both of which increased the local demand for milling.

Several chaff mills were operating in Werribee on the south side of the railway line by the 1920s, sited conveniently close to transport. Their approximate locations are indicated in an auction notice for Barbour's Glenluss Estate subdivision of 1923 (see Figure 51). Around the same time, W. Ison was advertising 'chaffcutting by electricity' for oats and hay in Cherry Street.[195] Ison's chaff mill was later taken over by Thompson Brothers General Merchants and Chaff Mill. The public weighbridge in Watton Street (HO105) was used by farmer to weigh the grain before taking it to the mill.[196]

Silos were constructed for the Carters poultry farm to manage the high volume of grain used as feed.

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195 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 9 December 1920, p. 3.

196 WDHS website—Thompson Brothers General Merchants and Chaff Mill.

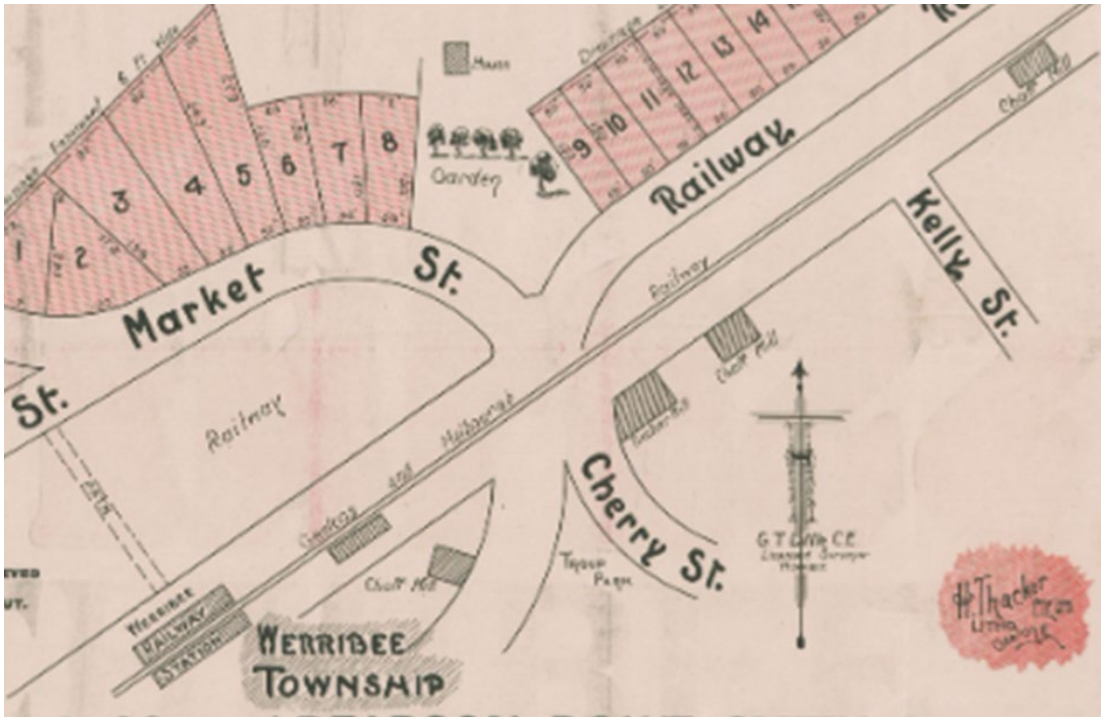

Figure 51 Detail from 1924 auction notice for Barbour's Glenluss Estate subdivision, showing the timber and chaff mills indicated on the south side of the railway line
Source: Thos. Roadknight & Co. et al 1923-24, Geelong and district real estate posters: Werribee, Deakin University

10.1.2 Meat processing

Local slaughter yards were established at Werribee and Little River in the mid to late nineteenth century and these were subject to municipal regulations of the Shire of Wyndham. The Meat Preserving Co. proposed to erect an operation at Little River in the 1870s.

The Werribee district was well placed to serve the pastoral industry, being a key stopping place between Melbourne and the prosperous Western District and being well served by transport. The development of refrigeration technology in the 1890s contributed to the development of the meat industry through the early 1900s and several meat-processing plants were established in the Laverton North area. The William Angliss Industrial Estate in Laverton North reflects this development.

The carter family had made their fortune through their poultry empire and was one of the largest sources of employment in the region through the middle of the twentieth century.

10.1.3 Wool and skins

In 1919 there were plans to relocate the noxious industries situated in inner Melbourne, particularly the inner west, to the relative isolation of Laverton. This included relocating the saleyards, the abattoirs, tanneries, fellmongers, and boiling-down works.[197] There is one remaining shed from the widespread skin-drying operations that were active in the Laverton area.

197 Information kindly provided by Gary Vines.

Manufacturing, including that of clothing and shoes, had been boosted in Melbourne the early 1920s owing to the Victorian Government's tariff protection measures. The by-products from the meat industry, including fleece and skins, had a range of commercial uses, and were critical to manufacturing in Melbourne. The rabbit industry, which was a major operation in the first half of the twentieth century, had a turnover of tens of thousands of skins and it is likely there were rabbit depots in the area.

Laverton North was a designated area for noxious industry from the early 1970s.[198]

10.1.4 Timber

Timber was not a major industry in the Werribee area, largely owing to the lack of timber as a local resource that could be exploited. There was a timber yard, mill and store on the corner of Cherry Street.[199]

10.2 Extractive industries

10.2.1 Quarrying

The land stretching between Melbourne and the South Australian border sits on rich basalt layers, resulting from the impacts of volcanic eruptions across the western plains tens of thousands of years ago and extending over a period of over many thousands of years. The earliest quarries in the areas around Werribee were likely small domestic quarries, dug through labour intensive methods for the construction of rudimentary houses and outbuildings. The readily available bluestone provided a hardy alternative to bricks for many of the early settlers.[200] Stone for the foundations of the Werribee Park mansion was also reputedly quarried on the property.

Through the 1830s and 1840s, the inner suburbs and land west of Melbourne supplied much of the stone used in construction throughout Melbourne. Many of the western suburbs were opened up for quarrying by the 1850s, and Melbourne's rapid expansion in that same decade saw land occupied by industries such as quarrying taken over for residential development.[201] This urban expansion saw quarries pushed to the outer suburbs and further afield, especially to the rich plains surrounding Werribee. Bluestone from the Werribee area was carted to Melbourne for the construction of many of the major buildings as well as for bridges and road-making, and as ballast for ships.[202]

In order to meet the labour demands of the quarries in the area, the Commissioner of Railways offered free train travel for workers from Melbourne to Werribee in 1878. The free travel carried the stipulation that the men would bring their own swag, and the free tickets were offered over multiple weeks in June of that year.[203]

The quarrying industry continued to be an important local industry through the twentieth century. In 1920, it was reported that work was being undertaken to establish a government quarry at Manor, west of Werribee. The government quarries were expected at the time to employ over 200 men in the region

198 May 1989, chapter 5.

199 Context 1997, 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham', p. 258.

200 Gary Vines 1993, Quarry and Stone, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Melbourne, p. 15.

201 Vines 1993, pp. 9-10.

202 Context 1997, p. 11.

203 *Age*, 8 June 1878, p. 5.

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and it was hoped that they would provide an incentive for further development of much of the vacant land in its surrounds.[204] By 1924, the quarry was referred to as the 'Railway Quarry' and a railway station at this location, known as Manor station, enabled ready transportation of stone. In 1927 it was estimated that the large bluestone quarry employed 66 men and provided thousands of tons of ballast for the Victorian railways.[205]Evidence of quarries can be seen throughout the municipality. Quarries were often repurposed as rubbish tips before being converted for use as public reserves.[206] The former railway gravel quarry, now Wyndham Park, is perhaps the best example of this within the municipality.

10.2.2 Salt works

Richard Cheetham, a chemist from Manchester in England, arrived in Australia in 1862, and by 1888 had begun construction of saltworks on land leased from the Victorian government between Limeburner's Point and Point Henry. The demand for salt meant that by 1924, the company purchased land between Laverton and Point Cook.

Salt was harvested in the area until the 1980s.[207] The refinery was closed in the late 1986 due to the salt pans requiring extensive repair. The eastern part of the site, located in the City of Hobsons Bay, contained the salt pans and remnant infrastructure. This area became Cheetham Wetlands. The land to the west lies in the City of Wyndham and was cleared for the development of the Sanctuary Lakes Resort in the 1990s.[208]

10.2.3 Coal

Altona, when still part of the Werribee Shire, had a short-lived role as a place for coal mining in the first few decades of the twentieth century. It was reported in 1902 that the area surrounding Altona had an 'almost inexhaustible supply of brown coal', which many believed would be used to power the electricity needs of the metropolis. In the same year, a bore on a Chirnside property near the Skeleton Creek revealed a large coal seam.[209] The single-shaft coal mine produced some 75,000 tons of coal between 1913 and 1919 alone, however a preference for coal sources elsewhere in the state, along with the growing suburbs of Melbourne, meant the plan was soon abandoned.[210]

10.3 Manufacturing

Much of the industrial development in the municipality was reliant on the natural resources in the area. The area largely escaped the heavy industrialisation that many of the western parts of Melbourne experienced through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There were some light manufacturing and minor engineering works in Werribee from the 1940s, which developed as part of wider decentralisation approach to industry at that time. A shoe factory was

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204 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 13 May 1920, p. 2.

205 *Advocate*, 27 November 1924, p. 26; *Dandenong Journal*, 27 October 1927, p. 4.

206 Gary Vines 1993, p. 30.

207 Gary Vines and Brett Lane 1991, *Worth its Salt: A survey of the natural and cultural heritage of Cheetham Saltworks, Laverton*, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Melbourne, p. 26.

208 Sanctuary Lakes Resort Services Ltd. 2011, 'What's Our Story? An Overview of Sanctuary Lakes'.

209 James 1985, p. 109.

210 James 1985, p. 110.

proposed in the 1940s and the ARP Hall in Werribee was used as a knitting mill.[211] The hall was eventually relocated to its present site at the corner of Dohertys Road and Woods Road, Truganina, in the 1960s.

There was also manufacturing operations in Laverton. More recent industrial sites have been established in the eastern region of the municipality, particularly in the area that adjoins Derrimut.

10.4 Food processing and chemical manufacture

By the 1970s there were some small-scale food-processing operations in and around Werribee (and possibly Laverton North) that developed as a result of the increased in local food production after the irrigation schemes had commenced. In the 1960s there was a pea-vining factory. By the 1970s there were establishments for antibiotic manufacturing and dyestuff manufacturing.[212]

10.5 Women's work

10.5.1 Domestic Service

One of the primary forms of employment available to women before World War I was domestic service, belying the limited opportunities for women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In the nineteenth century, women were typically occupied with farm work as well as running the home and caring for children. Typical female responsibilities were milking, making butter, and looking after the chooks. Paid work for the majority of women, as domestic servants, which was the norm before World War I, involved the same kinds of chores. A handful of women in the early period found employment as teachers, midwives, publicans or shop assistants, but the vast majority of women did not have the opportunity for paid work. The Camp Hotel, Werribee, was one such hotel operated by female publicans, including Sarah Mahony Martha Balfour and Catherine Perry.[213] Likewise, Metta Schulz, the Werribee postmistress from 1892, was a relatively rare and early example of a woman holding a position which was typically afforded to men. Whilst employment as a domestic servant often provided women with room and board, the wages were comparatively low and the work was physically demanding.[214] In areas such as Werribee and its surrounds, women would have found opportunities as domestic servants at Werribee Park and outside the study area at Eynesbury, Woolomanata and Mount Rothwell. Female domestic servants were usually tasked with roles within the 'domestic' sphere, like cooking, dressmaking, laundry work and overseeing the care of young children.[215] Single women were also sometimes employed as governesses for younger children. Whereas the wealthier families had servants with stratified positions, middle-class households often employed just one 'general' servant.

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211 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 29 November 1945, p. 2.

212 May 1989, chapter 4.2 and chapter 5 (no page numbers).

213 *Pers. Comm.*, R. Harrigan, Werribee District Historical Society, Response to Wyndham Heritage Review (Gap Study) Stage 1, Volume 2: Thematic Environmental History, April 2021, copy provided by Council.

214 Shurlee Swain 2008, 'Domestic Service', *eMelbourne*, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne.

215 James 1985, p. 15.

Domestic service saw a dramatic decline following World War I, when employment options for women began to gradually widen, and many could no longer afford the luxury of a live-in servant. There were some employment opportunities in Werribee and at the State Research Farm.

10.5.2 Australian Women's Land Army

With the onset of World War II, Australia experienced a shortage of labour due to the departure of men for military service. Many of the men joining the armed services and war industry were drawn from farms, and this included those farms and vegetable growers in the Werribee district.

The Australian Women's Land Army (Figure 52) was formed to help with the shortfall in agricultural labour. Recruits were drawn mainly from urban locations and were often unskilled in agricultural work. Many women were encouraged to join by the large-scale recruitment campaigns. Generally, the Land Army was divided between full-time members and auxiliary members, and both classes were provided with uniforms and equipment.[216]

In the Werribee district, the Land Army was most active at the State Research Farm. Members were engaged in regular farming activities; they were also provided with educational opportunities to be trained in meteorological readings, laboratory-level plant cataloguing, and recording the results of herd testing. Large swathes of land were also dedicated to the growing of fruit and vegetables, which before the war had been imported.[217]

Figure 52 Photograph showing members of the Australian Women's Land Army returning to their lodgings on the Government Experimental Farm (State Research Farm) in Werribee, published in the Herald, 30 October 1942.
Source: Australian War Memorial, ref. 136977

216 Australian War Memorial 2017.

217 *Herald*, 4 January 1943, p. 6.

10.5.3 Work in the postwar period

In the postwar period employment was more diverse. The Shire of Werribee grew significantly and offered a wider range of employment opportunities. There were new industries, such as those based at the Laverton industrial estate, as well as established businesses such as Carter's Egg Farm that continued to prosper.

A clothing factory was proposed in 1945, to be accommodated initially in the A.R.P. Hall in Werribee. It called for young women workers and promoted the favourable working conditions. The factory, operated by Latooff and Callil Pty Ltd, operated from premises in Beamish Street.[218]

Figure 53 Women workers grading eggs at Carters Poultry Farm.
Source: *Weekly Times*, 13 January 1940, p. 7

Figure 54 Female employees at Messrs Latoof and Calill's clothing factory, 1948.
Source: *Weekly Times*, 12 May 1948, p. 28

10.5.4 Changing nature of work and unemployment

Farm labour was the principal form of employment through the nineteenth century and into the early decades of the twentieth century. The excitement of the gold rush impacted adversely on the district with a sudden loss of rural labourers who headed to the goldfields. It is likely that Aboriginal workers were used to supplement the meagre labour force at this time. The Werribee area attracted a large number of unemployed single men at different times; this was on account of the town being on a major transport link and also because it was an area close to Melbourne where there was potential agricultural work available. Referred to as 'swagmen' or 'tramps', these hopeful workers arrived in Werribee and often camped in the parks or at the racecourse much to the chagrin of the local Council.

By the late 1800s and early 1900s, the local district saw the establishment of the Metropolitan Farm (1890s) and the State Research Farm (1912), both of which provided significant employment opportunities.

The region suffered from the impact of the economic depression of the 1890s, but the Great Depression that hit in 1929 took a greater toll. The unemployed gathered on the streets of Werribee, and deputations were made to the shire council to provide work for those who had lost their jobs. In 1930,

218 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 20 December 1945, p. 2.

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many of the workers at the Metropolitan Farm lost their jobs. The dairy industry suffered greatly, with the closure of the condensed milk factory run by the Federal Milk Company.[219]

There was some conflict between the local unemployed men and the government authorities who brought men into the district from suburban Melbourne to undertake work. The Werribee Shire Council eventually provided work for local men in the quarrying industry, as well as public works for jobs such as cleaning drains.[220] In 1931, the Werribee Traders' Association was formed to address issues surrounding the obtainment of credit, while the Werribee Progress Association joined forces with the Werribee Relief Committee to form an Unemployment Relief Committee. The dairy industry was given a boost when the Werribee Settlers' Dairying Co-operative purchased the former condensed milk factory for use as a fresh milk plant, and their efforts were so successful that they were able to erect a new factory in 1935.[221]

Some relief or sustenance ('susso') work was provided by the Werribee local council, for example in 1935 when the unemployed were given work on the irrigation channels.[222] The unemployed often took to life on the road, eking out a living doing odd jobs for farmers and others. The men who stayed on the road were known as swagmen; they were once a common sight on the Geelong Road and were still seen in the mid-twentieth century.

Figure 55 Workers at the Metropolitan Farm, Werribee, cleaning the silt out of the sewerage channels.
Source: Dingle and Rasmussen, *Vital Connections*, 1991

219 James 1985, p. 113.

220 James 1985, p. 112-13.

221 James 1985, p. 114.

222 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 16 May 1935, p. 4.

The postwar boom saw new industries emerge in the Werribee area, including food processing and other areas of manufacturing. The number of workers at the Metropolitan Farm peaked in the 1950s with over 500 employed.[223] The economic boom also attracted new immigrants to the area who had arrived in Melbourne to make a new life.

One of the changes to employment in the latter parts of the twentieth century was the considerable geographic distance of large numbers of employees from their place of work, which was aided by public transport links and private vehicle use. This has been fuelled by rising house prices in Melbourne and the ongoing westwards expansion of metropolitan Melbourne. Many residents in the City of Wyndham commute directly to workplaces located in the Melbourne CBD or beyond.

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223 Penrose 2001, p. 23.

11.0 BUILDING TOWNS AND CITIES

Places related to this theme include:

- Werribee commercial centre, Watton Street, Werribee
- Housing, Beamish and Cottrell streets, Werribee
- Housing, Rothwell Street, Little River
- Troup Park (HO105)

11.1 Developing towns

As a predominantly rural district, the towns which developed in the nineteenth century were small in number and serviced the heavily trafficked road and rail routes between Melbourne and Geelong. Smaller settlements did develop, however, with a handful of public buildings located at major road intersections.

Police superintendent Captain Lonsdale had recommended that a village be surveyed on the Werribee River as early as 1838, but no action was taken. The township of Wyndham was declared in Sydney on 9 May 1850 when Victoria was known as the Port Phillip District in the Colony of NSW.[224] Despite the local preference for the name Werribee, the town was given the name Wyndham in honour of a soldier who had fought at Waterloo (the name was changed to Werribee in 1884). A town plan, laid out in a grid arrangement, straddled the Werribee River at an S-bend, dividing the two parishes of Mambourin and Deutgam (Figure 56). In September 1850, ten half-acre lots in Wyndham, within the parish of Mambourin, were offered at auction.[225] By the 1860s, the streets of Wyndham had been named, and the township had been expanded to Edgar Street to the north, and Deutgam Street to the south. A police paddock and pound reserve were located to the west of Greaves Street, adjacent to the river[226]

In 1839, the Travellers' Rest Inn was opened on the Little River, which marked a crossing point on the track from Melbourne to Geelong. The opening of the hotel also provided travellers between Geelong and Melbourne with an alternate stopping point to the hotel already erected in Werribee. Twelve years later, in 1852, the township of Rothwell (Little River) was surveyed in the vicinity of the hotel. The development of the Melbourne–Geelong railway in the late 1850s, which was situated roughly one kilometre north of the original township, encouraged development to be gradually drawn to the land surrounding the railway station.[227]

The township of Wyndham rapidly developed its own character in its first fifteen years, both within its physical and social environments. In 1861, the town was described as follows:

> It is an ancient township, and numbers 15 years. It contains two hotels, about 20 houses, double that number of potato gardens, and nearly 100 inhabitants. An agrarian air pervades everything and everybody. All the men look like shepherds or ploughmen, and all the women carry pails, and have their skirts tucked up. Fashion

224 Murray 1974, p. 12; *Port Phillip Government Gazette*, 28 May 1850, p. 423.

225 James 1985, p. 24.

226 'Township of Wyndham, counties of Bourke and Grant', Office of Lands and Survey, Victoria, 1863, held by State Library of Victoria.

227 'Little River', Victorian Places website.

seems unknown, save in the new Railway Hotel, which has a dash of modern style about its weatherboards and metropolitan smartness in its paint. The Werribee runs through the town, and supplies the inhabitants with that grievance no well-regulated community can be without. The bridge, which the late floods carried away, has not been restored, and hence the complaints, which are so far well-grounded that but a few days since a man was drowned in an attempt to cross the river.[228]

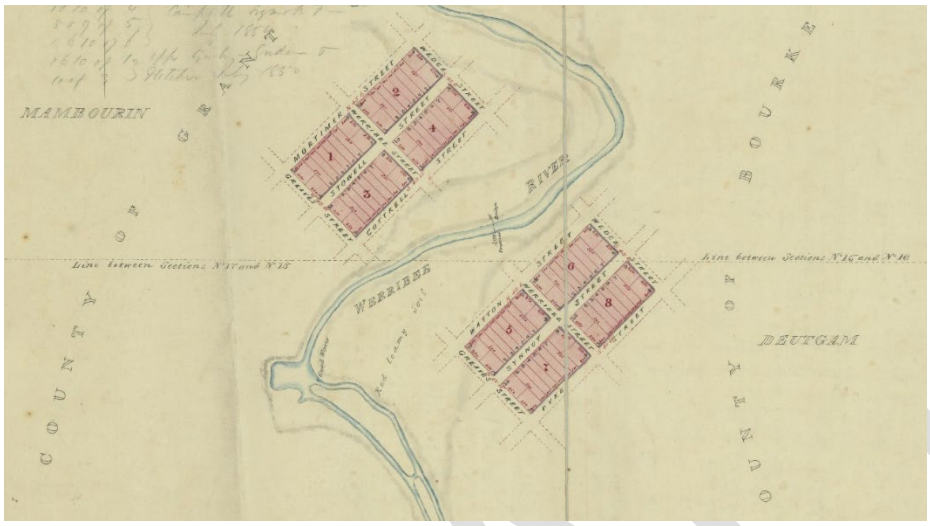

Figure 56 Plan of allotments in the town of Wyndham (version dated 1850)
Source: FEAT597, Historic Plan Collection, VPRS 8168, Public Record Office Victoria

Figure 57 Station Street, Werribee, c. 1910.
Source: Lost Werribee Facebook Page

228 *Argus*, 27 March 1861, p. 5.

The town of Rothwell, situated on the main crossing point on the Little River, was officially declared in 1852, and was later renamed Little River.[229] Like Werribee, Little River expanded to straddle both side of the river. Despite its development in the late nineteenth century and early 1900s, Little River was overshadowed by Werribee, and was occupied primarily with farming pursuits. Through much of the twentieth century, it remained a small country town, serving its immediate, largely rural population.

Other proposed townships failed to replicate the growth of Werribee and Little River. In the late 1850s, a speculative venture, the Melbourne Land Company, proposed a new village at what is now the intersection of Little River Road and the Princes Freeway, Little River. The subdivision of South Wyndham included a market square, reserves for mechanics institute, churches and school, along with 'town and suburban' residential allotments.[230] It is unclear if any lots were sold at the October 1859 auction, and there are no subsequent newspaper reports of this township. Although a passenger station was opened at Manor on the Melbourne-Geelong railway line in 1914, and land adjacent to the line was subdivided into residential sized allotments, no substantial development took place.

Smaller settlements such as Tarneit and Truganina were not large enough to be gazetted as towns in their own right. Truganina was regarded as a village, with its centre at the intersection of Woods and Dohertys roads, and by the early twentieth century comprised a cemetery, church, school and postal service.[231] The population of the small locality grew from 58 in 1911 to 338 in 2001, and has been more recently subject to residential development as part of a 2011 structure plan.[232] A school was established in Tarneit in 1875, located at the intersection of Hogans and Tarneit roads, servicing the small local population.[233]

In contrast to the siting of the early settlements on the main crossing places, a number of settlements emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including Cocoroc (Figure 58) and Murtcaim, which provided homes and services for the employees of the Metropolitan Sewage Farm. Cocoroc commenced in 1894 with 72 allotments; by 1897 there were 32 houses, a town hall, football ground, swimming pool, tennis courts, four state schools and a post office. The town reached a peak in the 1950s, when it had over 100 houses. By the 1970s, it was becoming too expensive for the MMBW to continue to subsidise Cocoroc, and by 1973 most buildings were demolished or moved to Werribee (or Little River), along with much of its population.[234]

Werribee has now developed into a major satellite city of Melbourne, which is accessible by rail and road.

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229 *VGG*, 4 February 1852, p. 131.

230 'Plan of the village of South Wyndham', undated, Fergusson and Mitchell, State Library of Victoria; *Argus*, 14 October 1859, p. 2.

231 'Truganina' Victorian Places, Monash University and University of Queensland, https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/truganina, accessed 20 July 2023; 'Ballan Sunbury Meredith & Melbourne', survey plan, 1917, Commonwealth Section Imperial General Staff, held by State Library of Victoria,

232 'Truganina' Victorian Places, Monash University and University of Queensland, https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/truganina, accessed 20 July 2023.

233 'Tarneit', Victorian Places, Monash University and University of Queensland, https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/tarneit, accessed 20 July 2023.

234 Melbourne Water 2020, Cocoroc township, www.melbournewater.com.au.

Figure 58 View of Cocoroc, 1947
Source: Cocoroc township, Melbourne Water, https://www.melbournewater.com.au/about/who-we-are/history-and-heritage/history-sewerage/cocoroc-township

11.2 Providing goods and services

The first commercial enterprises were hotels and inns on the major crossings in the district. This was typically followed by a blacksmith's foundry — that essential service provider to road travel before the advent of the motor car. The crossing places on the Werribee River and Little River also attracted general suppliers of essential goods, including food staples, hardware and tools.

As Werribee developed further in the early 1900s, there were a wider range of commercial operations in the town. Shops was centred initially along Station Street. Watton Street later emerged as the main shopping street. Stores included general stories, drapers, grocers, butchers, fruiterers, confectioners, hardware supplies and haberdashery. Barnes was a large store in Werribee in the c. 1920s. Shops were generally modest timber structures with a front verandah. Commercial services included banks, stock and station agents, solicitors, and insurance agents. Commercial premises were generally single storey with the exception of the hotels and the banks. Werribee developed increased commercial opportunities as the city grew. Automotive services were established on Railway Avenue.

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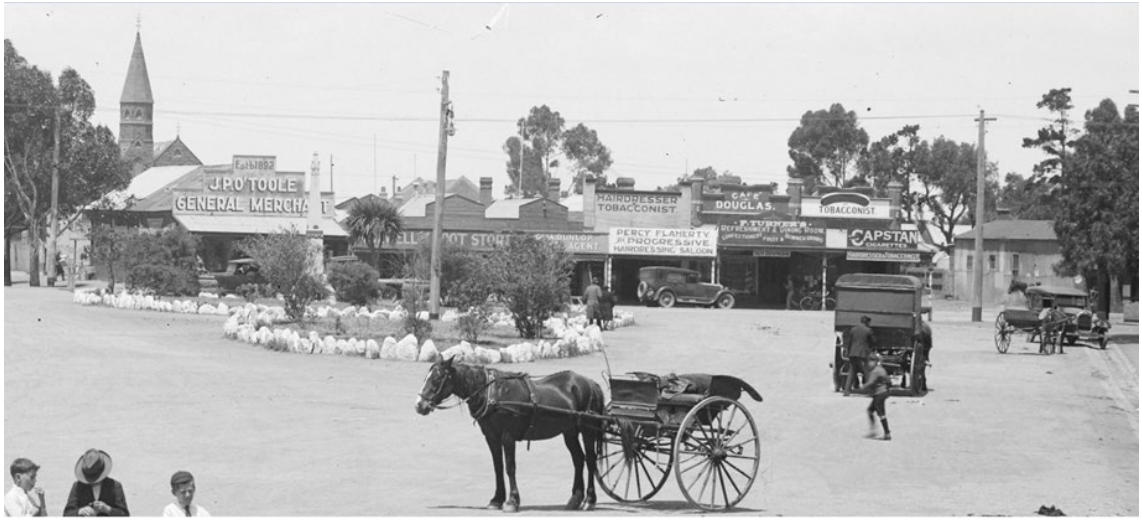

Figure 59 Detail from a postcard view of Station Street, Werribee, c. 1920s.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession No. H32492/7311

By the 1940s, however, the town of Werribee had expanded with a large residential population but was found to have comparatively poor local shopping facilities.[235] The direct rail line to Melbourne (and Geelong) encouraged locals to visit the larger centres for more specialised shopping needs: Forges of Footscray was regularly advertised in the Werribee Shire Banner. By the 1950s, there were increased commercial offerings in Werribee and a greater diversity of goods available. Commercial opportunities expanded again in the 1980s, notable with the development of Werribee Plaza.

The smaller towns provided fewer shops, and usually only essential goods. A longstanding store at Little River was the Campbell house and store at Edgars Road.[236] Another store in River Street comprised the post office, telegraph office and telephone exchange.[237]

In the 1960s and 1970s, the new residential areas incorporated shopping areas — for example at Hoppers Crossing where the Woodville Park Shopping Centre was provided as a drive-in, off-road shopping centre. Prior to that Hoppers Crossing had had just one store — Kopacka's General Store.[238]

11.3 Housing the population

11.3.1 Early town buildings

Early dwellings in Werribee and Little River were typically modest, timber-framed buildings. Traditional or vernacular building methods were also used, such as wattle-and-daub and adobe. Chimneys were most often rubble or surface stone rather than masonry. The town of Werribee (formerly Wyndham)

235 McIntyre and McIntyre 1944, p. 85.

236 Wyndham History, wyndhamhistory.net.au.

237 Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. com, April 2021.

238 'Hoppers Crossing', Wyndham History website, wyndhamhistory.net.au.

and the smaller settlements had relatively small populations prior to the 1890s. In 1881, there was a total of 57 inhabited dwellings in Werribee and 25 inhabited dwellings in Little River.[239]

11.3.2 Later nineteenth century: 1880s-1920s

The period from the 1880s through to the 1920s was one of significant growth and expansion through the wider Werribee district, as a result of several local (as well as broader) economic factors. The introduction of tenant farming from the 1880s brought a greater population and increased commercial activity. There was stimulus provided by the Metropolitan Farm from the early 1890s and a further increase in population due to closer settlement from the early 1900s. In 1881, about one-quarter of the population of the Shire of Werribee was living in Werribee township, and this increased steadily in tandem with the growth over the following decades.[240] . Between 1891 and 1901 the population of Werribee more than doubled from 427 to 1047 and the number of houses increased from 96 to 205 between.[241] From the early twentieth century, a number of larger Crown allotments to the north and south of the original Werribee town survey were subdivided into smaller residential allotments, including Beamish and Gibbons streets in 1909.[242]

Residents built their houses in line with the fashionable styles of the time. Middle-class families erected larger homes, often brick or timber villas within the Werribee township, while working-class people were more likely to occupy small timber cottages. In Little River a group of town residences were built in Rothwell Street in the early 1900s. With increased agricultural development, a number of farmhouses were also built in this period, which were largely single-storey timber dwellings. Most homes would have been built with decorative features that referenced the current styles.

Few elaborate homes were built in this period with the exception of George Chaffey's ornate 'Quantin Binnah' (1888-89) and Percy Chirnside's 30-roomed mansion, 'The Manor' (1895-96), designed by Alexander Hamilton of Colac. Neither of these houses survive.

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239 Henry Hamlyn Hayter 1881, *Census of Victoria 1881*, pp. 217, 222.

240 Victorian Places 2015, 'Werribee', www.victorianplaces.com.au

241 Ken James and Lance Pritchard, *Werribee the First 100 Years*, Revised Second Edition, Werribee District Historical Society, 2008, p. 48.

242 Plans of subdivision, LP5073 Beamish Street and LP5081 Gibbons Street, copies provided by Council.

Figure 60 A number of town residences were built in Rothwell Street, Little River, in the c. 1910s
Source: Lovell Chen, 2023

Figure 61 'The Manor', Werribee, designed by Alexander Hamilton in 1895-96 for Percy Chirnside.
Source: John T. Collins Collection, State Library Victoria, Accession No. H98.251/2681

11.3.3 Interwar housing

The Werribee district underwent considerable residential growth in the 1920s. This paralleled the wider suburban development in Melbourne after the First World War and came in response to a more buoyant economy in the 1920s. But there were also significant local factors for growth, such as the prosperous farming activity and employment opportunities. Large areas of land on the outskirts of the Werribee township, mostly north of the railway line, were subdivided to meet the growing demand for housing. The government-run State Savings Bank of Victoria provided affordable housing through the credit foncier scheme which provided long term loans with low interest. The scheme commenced in 1921, the same years that a branch of the State Bank opened in Watton Street, Werribee. The State Bank managed both the loans and the erection of the houses themselves.[243] It provided a range of house designs for aspiring homeowners to select from, which were designed by the State Bank architect G. Burridge Leith. The bank invited tenders from local builders to carry out construction in line with the selected house design. State Savings Bank houses were constructed in Werribee in growing residential areas, including in Glenluss Street.

This period also saw the subdivision and sale of larger nineteenth century properties adjacent to the town, with associated residential development. The Deutgam Estate, which included 170 blocks along Margaret, High and Wyndham streets, was sold by F Dubout in the mid-1920s, with 'spirited bidding' at the first auction held in December 1924.[244] Crown allotments to the east of Wedge Street South were subdivided in the 1920s, creating new residential streets including Francis, McDonald and Anderson streets.[245] The *Werribee Shire Banner* reported on the growth in the town:

> The progress of the district is being reflected in the number of dwelling and business places in the course of erection in Werribee … All speaks well for the progress of the town …[246]

The extent of residential construction in Werribee in this period can be seen in the c. 1938 oblique aerial photograph at Figure 62. Although some vacant land remains, numerous houses can be seen along streets including Francis Street and Gibbons Street.

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243 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 8 September 1921, p. 3.

244 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 11 December 1924, p. 6.

245 Plans of subdivision, LP8322 Francis Street, LP9545 Bolwell Street, LP9999 McDonald Street, copies provided by Council.

246 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 21 June 1923, p. 2.

Figure 62 Airspy oblique aerial photograph, c. late 1938, showing interwar residential development in Werribee. Gibbons Street is indicated
Source: Airspy Collection, H91.160/1545, State Library of Victoria

Under the War Service Homes Act (1918), war service homes for ex-servicemen were also built in the Werribee area from the 1920s. Like the early State Bank houses, these were modest timber-framed, detached homes built to a range of designs offered by the State Savings Bank of Victoria and also designed by G. Burridge Leith.[247] There were also private subdivision sales and speculative housing developments in Werribee through the 1920s; this activity was centred around the outskirts of the town centre, including to the east near the railway line and to the south near Duncans Road.

One of the wealthiest families in the region, the Carters, who made their fortune from their poultry empire, provided a large housing estate for their workers from the early 1940s. Between 1941 and 1954, the Carters erected over 60 brick veneer houses, with the Modernist-influenced designs prepared by architect W.J. Bliss. The estate's layout and house designs were influenced by the American Bungalow estates of the era, which often had concrete roads to service the emerging 'motor suburbs'.[248] The estate is now known as the Carter Housing Estate (HO21). The Carter family also built several grand, architect-designed homes in Werribee during the interwar years including Shirwall Court in Deutgam Street, erected in 1937, which was designed by Walter Pretty for Walter Carter, and Monleisha, at 51-59 Russell Street, designed by Arthur Pretty in 1940 for Roland Carter.[249] Both houses had substantial gardens, and the Monleisha grounds included a formal circular driveway that led to the main entry of the house, border plantings, trees, open grassed areas. as well as a large swimming pool and 15 aviary structures, each built as a conical hut.

247 For example, tenders were invited for the construction of a war service home in Glenluss Street, Werribee, in 1926 (*Werribee Shire Banner*, 25 March 1926, p. 2)

248 Context 1997.

249 Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'Arthur Pretty', Dictionary of Unsung Architects, http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_pretty.html.

The Carters' former homes have since been used for other purposes, including as a nursing home and a reception centre.[250] Shirwall Court is now operated as an aged care facility, known as Mercy Place. Other residences, including more substantial examples built of brick, were constructed in the interwar period and often were located south of the railway line.

A number of houses were relocated from settlements on the Sewerage Farm in the period of the 1940s to 1970s as these settlements became obsolete and workers moved away. Many of the timber houses, built in the c. 1890s, were relocated to other places, including Little River and Werribee.[251]

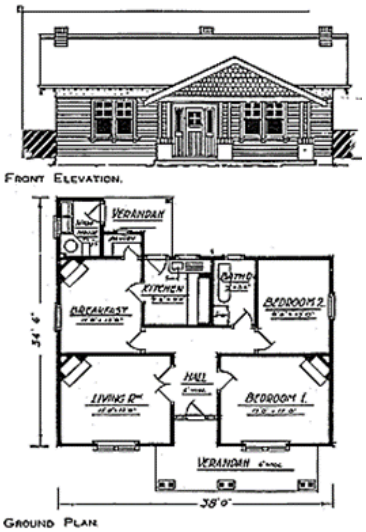

Figure 63 Type 13T State Bank House, 1929.

Figure 64 Example of a Californian Bungalow built c. 1920s, Princes Highway, Werribee.
Source: Lovell Chen, 2023

250 Walter M.S. Carter 1999, *The Carter Family of Werribee*.

251 Sue and Peter Jones, pers. comm., November 2020.

Figure 65 Shirwall Court in Deutgaim Street, Werribee, built for the Carter family in 1937. The house now operates as a nursing home, Mersey Side Health.
Source: Lost Werribee Facebook Page

Figure 66 ''La Paloma', Spanish Mission style bungalow of c. 1933.
Source: Lovell Chen, 2023

11.3.4 Postwar housing

The significant growth in population in Melbourne following the Second World War led to increasing demand for new housing. Extensive areas within the former Shire of Werribee were developed for housing in the postwar period. In Werribee, the Carters added a small number of houses for their employees in the Carter Estate in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Infill development also occurred in the interwar residential subdivisions of Werribee, including in Anderson Street (Figure 67) and Market Road. In Werribee South, earlier residences associated with the Closer or Soldier Settlement were replaced or superseded by brick veneer houses in the post-war period, as migrant market gardeners and farmers made the locality a permanent home. A number of examples are located on Diggers Road, with the substantial two-storey corner residence, Dematra, in Duncans Road constructed for the Patsuris family in 1963 (Figure 68).[252]

252 Rate Card, 395 Duncans Road, Werribee South, provided by Council.

Figure 67 Brick veneer residence, Werribee
Source: Lovell Chen, 2023

Figure 68 Dematra, Werribee South
Source: Lovell Chen, 2023

Housing Commission of Victoria

The *Werribee Banner* observed the shortage of housing in the district, in response to a visit by the State Government authority, the Housing Commission of Victoria (HCV) in 1949:

> Homes are just as hard to procure as they have been for many years, and there are not schemes or builders in Werribee at the present time catering generally for people desiring to rent homes.

No stone should be left unturned on the next visit of the Commission's officer to advise him of the importance of a scheme for Werribee and to revise the decision which claims that Werribee can be adequately supplied with homes for rental requirements by private enterprise.[253]In the Melbourne Planning Scheme of 1954 the Shire of Werribee remained outside the metropolitan area but was identified as a satellite city with growth potential.[254] The HCV was responsible for a number of residential developments in the municipality from the 1950s to the 1970s. In 1954, an area of 100 acres of the Metropolitan Farm was to be sold to the Housing Commission for residential development. Around 100 of the new homes would be reserved for workers at Werribee Farm, who were transported in each day.[255] However, there is no record of any sale agreement or of this development proceeding. In 1957, a new estate was developed by the HCV in Laverton, just outside the municipality, to respond to the need for accommodating staff employed at the RAAF base.[256]

In May 1961, the commission announced the purchase of 800 acres of land in Werribee, for approximately 3,000 houses.[257] As *The Age* reported, the development was designed to 'provide homes for people employed in the Werribee, Altona and Brooklyn areas', with housing for 'RAAF

253 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 8 September 1949, p. 1.

254 MMBW 1954, *Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme 1954 Report*, p. 29.

255 *Age*, 4 September 1954, p. 8; 7 September 1954, p. 8.

256 *Twentieth Annual Report of the Housing Commission of Victoria, for the period 1st July, 1957, to 30th June, 1958*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1958, p. 8.

257 'Twenty-third annual report of the Housing Commission Victoria for the period 1 July 1960 to 30 June, 1961', Government Printer, Melbourne, 1961, p. 7.

personnel stationed at Laverton and Point Cook'.[258] The development was to be known as Devon Park, with the first stage of construction undertaken in Section A, to the east of Market Road and south of Shaws Road (Figure 69, Figure 70).

The first tenders, for the construction of 100 brick veneer houses (alternative timber), were advertised in August 1961.[259] This was followed by subsequent tranches of tenders for construction of timber houses in 1961-2, with the construction of the five shops at the corner of Market Road and Vincent Street complete by August 1962.[260] By mid-1963, the number of houses completed or under construction had reached 283, of which 200 were brick or brick veneer.[261] A kindergarten was also constructed in Vincent Crescent. Development also occurred to the west of Market Road, in streets including in Hickory and Myrtle streets.

Figure 69 Plan of the HCV's Devon Park Estate subdivision, c. 1960
Source: Housing Commission Victoria, held by State Library Victoria

258 *The Age*, 26 May 1961, p. 3.

259 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 24 August 1961, p. 5;

260 Werribee Shire Banner, 2 November 1961, p. 5, 7 December 1961, p. 2, 5 July 1962, 16 August 1962, p. 5, and 25 October 1962, p. 5.

261 'Twenty-fifth annual report of the Housing Commission Victoria for the period 1 July, 1962, to 30 June, 1963', Government Printer, Melbourne, 1963, p. 20.

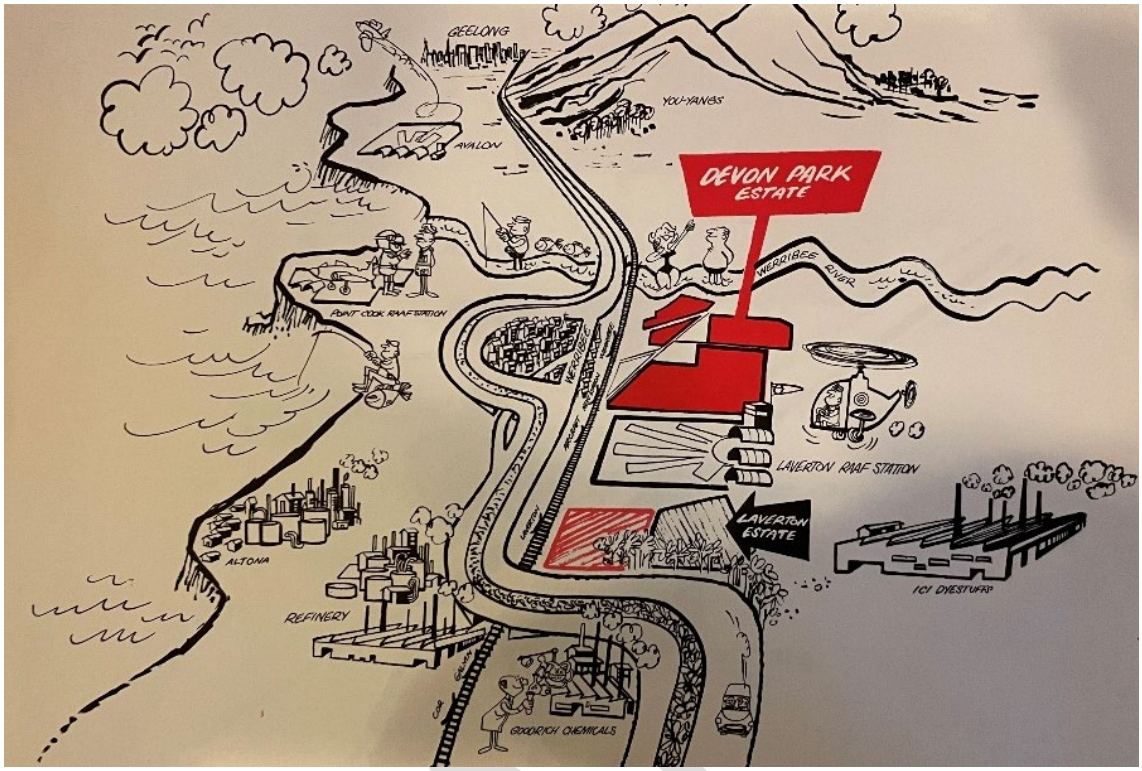

Figure 70 Promotional cartoon in the Devon Park brochure
Source: Housing Commission of Victoria, H 354.945 V66ST (2017/471), held by State Library of Victoria

Recently constructed houses at Werribee

Figure 71 New homes erected by the Housing Commission of Victoria in Werribee, mid-1960s.
Source: Housing Commission of Victoria Annual Report, 1965-66

The 1950s and 1960s housing built by the HCV embraced some modest Modernist influence. The HCV's approach to estate planning by this time has been described as one of 'ordered variety': Row upon row of similar houses constructed in monotonous grid patterns were considered unacceptable. Instead, the approach taken allowed for far more flexibility and diversity, but estate plans were still required to be both practical and cost effective. Consequently, houses of the same type were separated by at least three or four housing blocks, others were set back on their respective block, while others were sited so that the gable or hip faced the street. These changes, simple as they were, helped to some extent to prevent an impression of drab uniformity. There was also a shift away from conventional street layouts, with curvilinear designs, narrow roadways, lower, softer-edged kerbing, and dead-end 'courts' being common. Front fences and common footpaths were often done away with so that the front lawn extended openly to the kerb rather than there being a more conventional and defined 'nature strip'. Small reserves for children's playgrounds were often added to the layout.

The postwar period saw new modern home designs introduced. It is possible that some new homeowners made use of the Small Home Service, which was a progressive architectural service that ran a column in the newspaper, advocating the building of small modern homes that exhibited good design.

New suburban development

North-east of Werribee at Hoppers Crossing, housing development commenced with following the first housing subdivision in 1963. Warranwood Avenue was the first release of the Woodville Park Estate at Hoppers Crossing in 1963.[262] The brick veneer frontier continued to push outwards. By the 1970s, development had quickly transformed this farmer farming area into an instant suburb. Here, homes were predominantly single-storey brick veneer, with many property developers offering prospective new homeowners the opportunity to shop for their future home through the provision of 'display homes'. Little by way of infrastructure was established at the outset and residents waited extensively for services to be connected.[263] In the 1980s some new streets in Hoppers Crossing were paved rather than sealed with asphalt.

New homes in Werribee and Hoppers Crossing in the 1960s and 1970s were a mixture of conventional double-fronted brick veneer, modern contemporary, modern reproductions of earlier retrospective styles, and postwar migrant aesthetic, with a strong use of palms and conifers providing a landscape setting for the latter. Brown brick was the most common building material from the 1960s to the 1980s. Local architect John Flynn designed a number of significant homes in Werribee in the 1960s and 1970s, including a flat-roofed house in Slattery Street.[264]

Housing development continued through the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century in the urban growth corridor of the west, with a number of new estates. A new residential area known as Wyndham Vale, north-west of Werribee, was established in the 1980s. The last 10–15 years has seen significant and rapid housing development at Point Cook, Tarneit and Truganina. New housing estates in these areas show a preference for double-storey homes on smaller blocks.

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262 Lost Werribee Facebook Page.

263 Wyndham History, wyndhamhistory.net.au

264 Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'M. John Flynn', Dictionary of Unsung Architects, http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_flynn.html

11.4 Planting trees and cultivating gardens

Early homestead gardens were established by the 1840s and 1850s, for example at the Chirnside's Point Cook homestead; while some mature trees remain at this site, little has been recorded about the development of the gardens. It was common for early homestead gardens to cultivate what was readily available (for example, from seeds and cuttings from friends). Flower gardens usually ornamented the front of the house and a produce or kitchen garden was established at the rear. Windbreaks and shade trees were also established early, with species contingent on what was available from local nurserymen. Monterey Cypress (Hesperocyparis macrocarpa) was widely used as a windbreak on the western plains and was available to purchase from local nurserymen by the late 1850s.[265]

Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, director of Melbourne Botanic Gardens, provided trees to the Werribee Shire Council in 1869.[266] Though the species are not known, Mueller is known to have favoured conifers. It is possible that these were planted at Kelly Park, which was reserved in 1864, or at Chirnside Park or the Werribee Cemetery. Street trees were planted in Werribee from at least 1880, when Elms were planted in Watton Street. In 1884 the shire council proposed street tree planting in Cottrell (Cotterill) Street, with every alternate tree to be a deciduous variety.[267]

William Guilfoyle, who was Mueller's successor as director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, and the pre-eminent landscape designer of late-nineteenth century Victoria, is credited for preparing a plan for the local council for the layout of Chirnside Park (then called Werribee Park), a public recreation reserve on the Werribee River.[268] Guilfoyle provided a plan to the Wyndham Council in 1878 but this appears to have not been what was required and proved too costly to execute.[269] It is thought that he prepared a more suitable plan. By late September 1878, an alternate proposal - to undertake work according to Guilfoyle's plan, but only as far as 'doing the border' and that the 'ornamental lines be straightened' - was discussed at a Council meeting.[270] It is unclear the extent to which Guilfoyle's plan was carried out, although it was 'adopted' by Council at the September meeting.[271] Planting of the park appears to have taken place throughout the 1880s, with the Footscray *Independent* newspaper reporting that:

> … never was money laid out more judiciously than when it was decided to plant the local recreation reserve with evergreens. These trees though not having many years of growth have come forward with astounding rapidity, many of them now attaining altitudes varying from fifteen to thirty feet. [272]

265 Margaret Brooks and Richard Barley 2009, *Plants Listed in Nursery Catalogues in Victoria 1855 to 1889*, Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia, South Yarra.

266 Correspondence with Ferdinand Mueller, copy held by WDHS; noted on Lost Werribee Facebook page.

267 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 4 April 1905, p. 4; *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 February 1884, p. 2.

268 Serle 1983, p. 45. The connection to Guilfoyle is cited in the entry on 'Chirnside Park', Wyndham History, www.wyndhamhistory.net.au.

269 *Williamstown Chronicle*, 14 September 1878, p. 3.

270 *Williamstown Chronicle*, 5 October 1878, p. 3.

271 Wyndham Council Minutes, 28 September 1878, p. 328, in Minute Books, VPRS 2129/P0/4, Public Record Office Victoria.

272 *Independent*, 2 June 1883, p. 2.

Guilfoyle would have most likely visited Werribee Park and it is possible that he provided the Chirnsides with either some unofficial advice or more substantial plans for the formal gardens.[273] The garden, which combines elements of the English landscape tradition and nineteenth century gardenesque, has been attributed since the 1920s to Guilfoyle, designer of a number of public and private ornamental gardens across the Western District. While no direct evidence has been found to prove any links to Werribee Park, elements of the Werribee Park garden had a strong Guilfoylean character, notably the lake, shell grotto and rustic arbours. The extensive formal gardens also included fountains, ferneries, parterres, a croquet lawn, glasshouses, an island on the lake and a ha-ha wall.

Other notable private gardens of the late-nineteenth century, including The Manor and the Chaffeys' Quantin Binnah, have been lost although mature remnant trees survive at both sites. Fashionable Melbourne landscape designer William Sangster was contracted to prepare a garden layout for The Manor in 1896.[274] The larger properties were also planted with windbreaks and avenues of trees along the entrance drives, for example at Werribee Park, Quantin Binnah and The Manor. In the 1890s, Radiata Pine (Pinus insignis) and Blue Gum (Eucalyptus globulus) were favoured for plantation planting.[275] Sugar Gum was also widely used for this purpose by local landowners in the early twentieth century. The development of the MMBW of the Sewerage Farm in the early 1890s began with the planting of the boundaries with trees.

In the early twentieth century, a number of planted reserves were developed in and around Werribee, as part of a was a push to beautify the Werribee township in the local newspapers. These include Troup Park (HO105, Figure 72), a tree reserve developed in the early twentieth century. Gardens at the site were watered and cared for by Werribee Councillor Bill Troup, and the reserve gained the name 'Troup Park' in recognition of his commitment to the place. In 1910, the reserve was sown with grass, and in 1917, new shrubs and flowers were planted, with the park enclosed by a fenced.[276]

More limited street planting was undertaken around Little River in the late nineteenth century, with a programme of tree planting, including sugar gums and pines, undertaken by the Wyndham Shire Council around the Little River township in the 1890s, addressing both the council's reserves and streetscape areas.[277] By 1899, there were said to be 'several tree-planted reserves, in addition to numerous rows of street (or road) trees, all well looked after and protected by good substantial guards', which possibly included the eucalypt street trees in Edgars Road, You Yangs Road and Boadles Lane.[278]

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273 Murray 1974, p. 44; Jessie Serle 1983, Point Cooke: A history prepared for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, p. 45; Allom Lovell Sanderson and Jessie Serle 1985, 'Werribee Park Metropolitan Park: Conservation analysis', prepared for the MMBW, pp. 314-15; *Blairs Guide to Victoria*, 1987, 278; Watts 1980, pp. 134-35; Georgina Whitehead (ed.) 2001, *Planting the Nation*, Australian Garden History Society, Melbourne, p. 139.

274 Murray 1974, p. 58; *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 28 March 1896, p. 3.

275 *Leader*, 30 December 1893, p. 7.

276 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 5 November 1910, p. 4; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 18 January 1917, p. 2.

277 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 6 June 1896, p. 1, and 19 September 1896, p. 3

278 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 29 April 1899, p. 1.

Figure 72 A *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Date Palm) in Troup Park, Watton Street, Werribee
Source Lovell Chen, 2019

Private gardens were laid out according to the fashions of the period but often have been altered over time. Werribee Park is a lavish and atypical example of a grand homestead garden established in the high Victorian period and developed further in the Edwardian era. Whilst certainly remarkable, it is atypical of homestead gardens in the municipality. Like the larger homesteads, farmhouse gardens also typically had a flower garden, as well as the essential kitchen garden and orchard. Popular specimen trees included Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and Canary Island Date Palm. While garden layouts followed the favoured style of the period, they were also determined by the nature of the site. There are some typical postwar-era gardens in the Werribee South irrigation area, characterised by their formal appearance, often with neat lawns, clipped shrubs, and deciduous specimen trees and conifers, including for example Italian Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*).

Typical postwar suburban gardens were simpler than their Victorian and Edwardian predecessors. Plants with bold foliage and bright flowers were often used, but more sparingly. Popular plants included Corylines, Dahlias, and Roses. Rocks and pebbles were used for edging and pathways. Concrete was also used for pathways and for edging garden beds. Raised front balconies or terraces (sometimes tiled) became fashionable and these were often ornamented with pot plants. From the 1950s to the 1970s front fences were generally low or non-existent. Boundary fences between properties were often abandoned for the front section of the block, in an effort to create a seamless, uninterrupted parklike landscape rather a series of boxed-in squares. Bush gardens were also developed from the 1970s, often in association with contemporary home designs of the period.

11.5 Expanding metropolitan Melbourne and making new suburbs

The City of Wyndham has seen extensive development since World War II. Werribee had long been an area with a strong demand for housing, for example for workers at the Metropolitan Farm and the State Research Institute. From the 1960s and 1970s, Werribee was promoted as a favourable and attractive place to live. Touted as 'a home in the country', it offered the benefits of a metropolitan city but with plenty of open space and affordability.

In 1971 the Melbourne Planning Scheme, prepared by the Board of Works, introduced Metropolitan Growth Areas as linear 'corridors' that enabled urban growth. These were zoned to allow for housing development, on the fringes of fast-growing areas of Melbourne.[279] Werribee was designated one of these growth corridors for the wider Melbourne metropolitan area, with others being the Plenty Valley corridor and the south-eastern corridor, with each area being protected by a green wedge of preserved open space and natural vegetation.[280]

279 Dingle and Rasmussen 1991, pp. 319-320, redact plan on p. 320; Duncan 1982, p. 86.

280 Ministry for Planning and Environment 1989. 'Werribee Growth Area: A technical report', October 1989, p. 10.

Figure 73 Understanding growth corridors: a cartoon from the Herald, 3 December 1971. Source: Dingle and Rasmussen, *Vital Connections*, 1991

This period saw a significant increase in residential development, with new housing developments emerging in areas that had previously been farmland. Hoppers Crossing was developed as a new planned suburb and was largely privately developed. The transformation of Hoppers Crossing was rapid; in 1960 it had one general store and by 1994 the population was around 40,000.[281]

The increase in residential development has impacted the rural character for which the region was known, particularly in the eastern portions that have rapidly been transformed to become the outer suburbs of Melbourne. Nonetheless, the municipality retains many rural areas which continue to attract those seeking country living.

281 Victorian Places, Hoppers Crossing.

12.0 GOVERNING AND KEEPING ORDER

Places related to this theme include:

- Former Shire Hall, Werribee (HO110)
- House (Former police paddocks area), Werribee (HO79)

12.1 Local government

The Wyndham District Road Board was proclaimed in 1862.[282] The first annual meeting was held in November 1863.[283] The road board was replaced by the Wyndham Shire Council in March 1864 and extended from Footscray to Little River, and north to the Melton Reservoir. A site for a shire hall and office was reserved in 1864.[284] The first meetings were held at Elliott Armstrong's hotel until a purpose-built shire hall was erected in bluestone in 1866 and opened in 1867.[285] Early responsibilities of the shire included forming and maintaining roads, establishing a pound and pound keeper, assessing rates on properties, and addressing nuisances.

The village surveyed in 1849 on the present site of Werribee was named Wyndham. However, the original name of Werribee remained more popular than Wyndham and the town's name was officially changed to Werribee in 1884.[286]

The Shire of Wyndham was renamed the Shire of Werribee in 1909 and Altona was annexed in 1957 forming a separate shire. Following the restructuring of council boundaries, the shire became the City of Wyndham in 1994 and a small area in the north was transferred to City of Melton.[287]

282 '1862 - Wyndham District Road Board is proclaimed', Wyndham History, http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au.

283 *Geelong Advertiser*, 20 November 1863, p. 3.

284 *VGG*, 25 October 1864, p. 2388.

285 *pers. Comm., Werribee* District Historical Society, Wyndham Heritage Review consultation, 2 May 2023. .

286 Victorian Places 2015, 'Wyndham City', https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/wyndham-city.

287 Victorian Places 2015, 'Werribee', https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/werribee.

Figure 74 The first Werribee Shire Hall, erected in 1866-7.
Source: Context 1997

Figure 75 The second Werribee Shire Hall, erected in 1893, Rose postcard, n.d. (c. 1950s).
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession No. H32492/7300

12.2 Maintaining law and order

From the middle of 1835 settlers took the law into their own hands and attempted to settle disputes themselves with the Aboriginal people and amongst the settlers. The murder of Charles Franks and his shepherd in July 1836 prompted Governor Bourke soon after to despatch William Lonsdale to Port Phillip as police magistrate.[288] Nonetheless, disputes and conflicts continued in the early period of settlement on the Werribee plains. This was a major throughway to the first significant pastoral settlement of the Western District – it was a much-used route and was challenging to police. The stealing of horses and stock and the pilfering of goods was a common occurrence.

From the late 1830s, a mounted Aboriginal police force, known as the 'Native Police', carried out some of the earliest policing on the Werribee Plains, and particularly in cases that involved conflict between settlers and Aboriginal people. Established in 1838, the Native Police were based in Melbourne but also covered the country districts and operated from 1837 to 1838 and again from 1852.[289]

The first police site set aside in a new town or settlement was generally the police paddock, and typically this was a large reserve with frontage to a river or creek so that the police horses had ready access to water. A police paddock of a bit over 69 acres, was established on the Werribee River at Werribee in c. 1855, and a contract let for the fencing of the reserve the following year.[290] The Werribee Police Paddock is marked in the 1857 town plan. Police were known to have been stationed at Werribee before 1856, however the temporary reservation of the 69-acre site was not formalised until 1869.[291] The first police station at Werribee was a pre-fabricated iron building of the type widely used for early policing in the 1850s This building was replaced at an unknown date with a modest brick building, now

288 Kiddle 1961, p. 34.

289 Marie Hansen Fels 1988, *Good Men and True*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

290 *VGG*, 17 October 1856, p. 1741.

291 James and Pritchard 2008, p. 114; Township of Wyndham 1857, SLNSW; *Police Life*, December 1958, p. 8; *VGG*, 17 February 1909, p. 1379.

a residence.[292] The location of the police paddock and buildings can be seen on the plan of 1863 (Figure 76) A lock-up was also erected.[293] The police paddock reservation was revoked in 1909 and was subdivided the following year,[294] with presumably some portion being retained for public buildings. Police operations were relocated to Station Street in 1938, following community agitation for a more centrally positioned site.[295]

A police paddock reserve was also set aside on the riverbank at Little River. A one-acre site for police purposes at Little River was reserved at Little River in 1864.[296] A police station was erected at Little River by 1895. Police stations at both Werribee and Little River included a lock-up.

The establishment of local magistrates' courts (or courts of petty sessions) occurred in the early period of settlement. This was where cases were initially heard before progressing to the County Court. It was typical for local landowners to be appointed as local magistrates. Courts were often heard in private homes or in a local hotel before a proper courthouse could be erected. In 1883, the Wyndham Council granted the government the use of the Shire Hall for a Court of Petty Sessions.[297] A local police court (within the jurisdiction of the Geelong Police District) operated in Werribee from c. 1911 and this was held in the reading room of the Werribee mechanics hall.

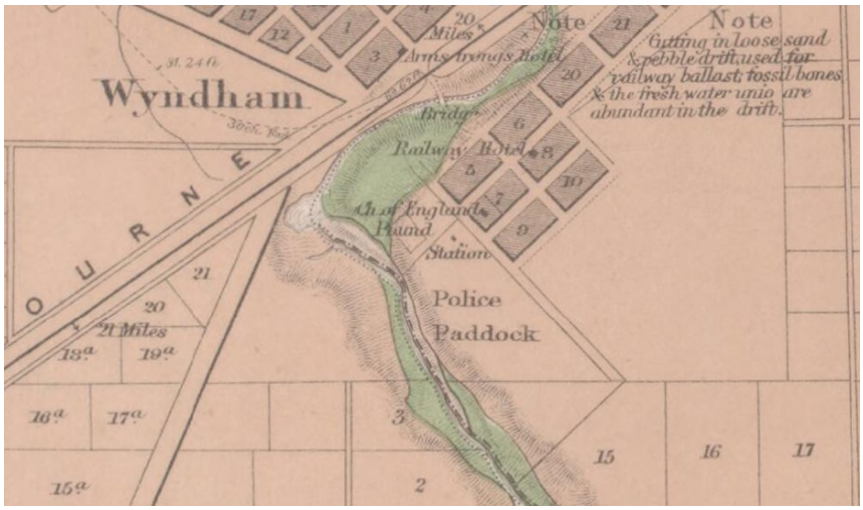

Figure 76 'Police paddock' and [police] 'station', Werribee, marked in the plan of the Geological Survey of Victoria, dated 1863.
Source: National Library of Australia

292 'HO99, Police House (former), 129 Synnot Street, Werribee', Heritage Citation, Wyndham Heritage Study, 1997.

293 'Police Lock Up, Paddock Site, Synnot Street, Werribee', Wyndham History: http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/405.

294 'Police Lock Up, Paddock Site, Synnot Street, Werribee', Wyndham History: http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/405; VGG, 17 February 1909, p. 1379.

295 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 24 March 1938, p. 2,

296 *VGG*, 18 October 1864, p. 2337.

297 22 November 1883, Wyndham Shire Minute Book: PROV, VPRS 2129, Unit 6, via R Harrigan, Werribee District Historical Society, 2021.

Figure 77 Former police station, Synnot Street, Werribee, built in 1862.
Source: Victorian Heritage Database

12.3 Fighting for political rights

There have been various political tensions percolate at different times in the Werribee district, between capital and labour and between large and small landowners, as well as sectarian and racial tensions – for example, between Catholic and Protestant, and between 'Old' and 'New' Australians. Sections of the population within the area now known as the City of Wyndham have faced instances of discrimination and injustice through different periods of history. As discussed in Section 1, Aboriginal people were pushed out of their Country in the mid-nineteenth century and have been subject to wide-ranging forms of injustice since the beginning of British settlement. Some Aboriginal people worked on pastoral stations but their entire way of life was turned upside down and they lost so much of their long-established connection with Country. Aboriginal people endured the loss of their land and access to water and traditional resources as a result of settlement. Aboriginal people in Victoria, including those from the Wyndham area, made efforts to seek compensation from the government from the 1840s and 1850s. They had no success until the 1970s when land was returned to them in parts of Victoria. Increased mechanics for self-determinisation continued from the 1990s with the *Native Title Act* (Vic) 1994, and through better opportunities in Aboriginal health, Aboriginal justice, Aboriginal childcare and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

From the late-nineteenth century women fought for the right to vote on the same terms as men and t some of the signatories to the 'monster petition' for women's suffrage in 1891 were Wyndham residents. Interestingly, it was women of Little River whose signatures are most numerous on the petition, with apparently only one signature from Werribee.[298] The growing recognition of the rights of women and children in the early 1900s saw women's suffrage being awarded in Victoria in 1908. In terms of local political representation, there have been a number of female councillors for the former Shire of Werribee, and later for the City of Wyndham.

298 Women's petition, online index, https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/search-women-s-petition. Accessed 9 August 2023.

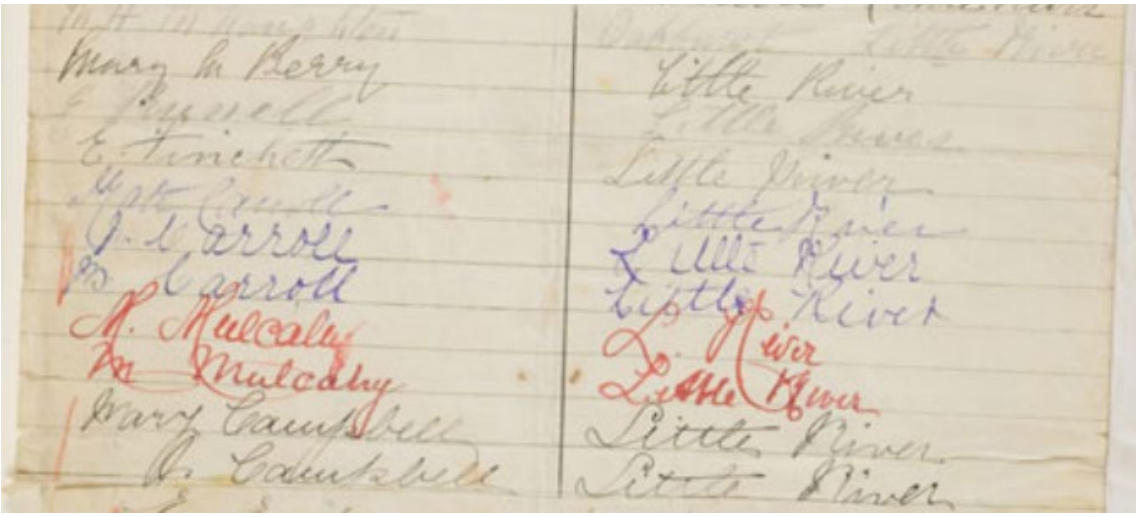

Figure 78 Signatures on the 'monster petition' by women of Little River
Source: Women's petition, Parliament of Victoria

Conflict between squatters and farmers (free selectors) intensified in the early 1860s, when the second Land Act ('the Grant Act' of 1862) allowed for small holders to take up land under the free selection provisions but were forced to contend with a monopoly situation of land ownership in the local area. There were protestations from local famers about access to public roads being denied by large landholders, and the mis-use of the public 'farmers' common by large landowners whose use it was not designed for.[299]

Disputes between rural labourers and landowners in the Werribee and Little River districts from the late-nineteenth century culminated in the widespread industrial unrest of the 1890s and the formation of the Australian Workers' Union. Shearers at Robert Chirnside's Mount Rothwell Estate voted to strike over pay in September 1893, with most of the shearers being small landholders residing in the Little River district.[300] Industrial disputes continued into the early 1900s with workers demanding better wages. One labour organisation encountered industrial unrest in Werribee during harvest time in 1912 when there was a strike amongst the threshers who refused to work the machines at the price offered by the machinery owners. He argued that 'the Werribee cocky is the greatest sweater in Victoria', in being unwilling to pay a fair wage.[301] There was unrest again in the Werribee and Little River districts in January 1917 over the price farmers were paying threshers, which led to the 'Werribee strike'. Disgruntled members of the Werribee branch of the Victorian Farmers Union met at the Werribee Shire Hall and sought to prevent the strike action from affecting the transport workers as well.[302] The strong position of labour in Werribee was also reflected in the results of the conscription referendum in 1917, when Werribee had a highest 'No' vote in the Corio electoral division.[303] The Victorian Farmers Union, which commenced as an interest group of primary producers was formed in 1914 to oppose the political

299 Sue and Peter Jones, pers. comm., November 2020; James and Pritchard 2008, Werribee: The first 100 years.

300 *Age*, 4 October 1893, p. 6.

301 *The Worker*, 18 December 1912, p. 1.

302 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 25 January 1917, p. 3.

303 *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 November 1917, p. 2.

strength of organised labour unionism amongst rural workers. By 1917 it had developed into a political party, known as the Victorian Country Party.

From the 1920s there was a significant Italian community in the Werribee area and this group faced persecution from the mainstream population. Non-British immigrants posed an imagined threat to 'Anglo-Australian' labour, and unfamiliar culture, language and food was not accepted by all. There were no doubt strained relations at times, when extreme political positions were adopted. It is likely that the Werribee branch of Sezione Fascista (Fascist Section), an Italian fascist organisation that supported Mussolini, was not popular with all of Werribee's working-class population.[304] Their support for Mussolini probably contributed to the arrest of a large number of Italians in 1940 who were deemed to be 'enemy aliens'.

Industrial disputes continued in the district. Carters Egg Farm was the subject to a significant strike by workers in 1948.

Figure 79 Front and back sides of a hand-sewn fabric pennant created for the Sezione Fascista, Werribee, c. 1930s.
Source: Museum Victoria

304 Museum Victoria, Item SH 940595: https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/250386

13.0 SERVICING THE COMMUNITY

Places related to this theme include:

- Churches, halls and parks (municipality-wide)
- Werribee Primary School (HO31)
- Diggers Road Soldiers Memorial Hall (HO33)
- Truganina Cemetery (HO39)

13.1 Social life

Social gatherings in the early days of Werribee and its broader locality followed the pattern typical of many country areas in Victoria. Social life revolved around the churches, sporting events, the harvest times, public holidays and local fund-raising activities. A point of difference in early social life of the district was the role of the Chirnside family whose role as local lairds played a key role in shaping the social life of the district and in providing social activities for the people.

13.1.1 Role of the Chirnsides

The operation of the Chirnside's vast Werribee Park estate, with its lavish mansion, associated social activities, provision of employment to local people and tenant farmers, and focus on the breeding of prize stock and fallow deer, emulated the lifestyle of the British landed gentry. Until c. 1920, social life in the district was governed to some extent by what could likened to an Old World aristocratic model, with the 'laird' or 'lord of the manor' presiding, directly and indirectly, over much of the life of the district. The laird was initially Thomas Chirnside, and subsequently, George T. Chirnside. Other pastoral estates also had some bearing on the development of the district including Eynesbury, built by the Staughton family, and Wooloomanata (outside the study area), belonging to the Armytage family. The prominence of Werribee Park, however, gave the Chirnside family unparalleled dominance and influence in local politics and society. Werribee Park played host to various lavish social events for wealthy, fashionable society, including military encampments, hunts, picnics, balls, and vice-regal visits.[305] The estate also served as a centre for the social life of the district, with the Chirnside's hosting social events for their estate workers and tenant farmers, and the wider local community, including annual fetes and dances.[306] These events were regularly reported on in the local newspapers, as well as attendance by members of the Chirnside family at other social events in Melbourne.

> Another of those social reunions for which the name of Mr Thomas Chirnside has now become famous, took place at Werribee Park ..to guard against … unseemly conduct, cards of invitation were issue for this occasion [and] the gathering was certainly of a more select and decourous character … (1882)[307]

Many of the local institutions, which were central to local social life had relied on the Chirnside family rather than other sources of funding for the land they stood on and their construction. However, despite the perceived dominance of the Chirnsides in the social life of Wyndham in the press, there were other opportunities for gathering and entertainment in the townships. As well-known and wealthy residents

305 Victorian Heritage Database, Werribee Park, Place ID1207.

306 For examples, see 1880, 1881, 1882, 1910.

307 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 8 April 1882, p. 2.

of the district, the Chirnside family attracted media attention, likely drawing attention away from less extravagant events. The *Williamstown Chronicle* observed in 1879 that the Wyndham Dancing Saloon was the venue for dancing until the early hours.[308] Likewise, places such as hotels, churches and sporting clubs, which were not directly linked to the Chirnsides, provided Wyndham residents with opportunities for gathering and socialising. Tracing the dynamics of social life and social interaction in the Werribee district, class lines clearly drawn. Wealthy graziers, such as the Chirnsides, largely kept to themselves, and generally only mixed with the workers and tenant farmers on public occasions that celebrated the family's patronage of or involvement in local institutions and events. The middle class — comprising government officials, religious clergy, bank managers, doctors, dentists and accountants, station managers, stock agents, and other professionals — to some extent moved more freely across the different social strata. Clubs and societies.

13.1.2 Clubs and societies

Werribee and Little River and some of the smaller centres of population established various social clubs and societies in the late-nineteenth century. These groups were important to the early development of social life. In the late-nineteenth century, examples included the Freemasons, the Irish National Foresters and the Rechabites. There was also a St Patrick's Society and the Band of Hope. The Australian Natives' Association (ANA), a friendly society for Australian-born (white) men, became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century, with a branch established in Werribee. Apart from the Masons, who had tenancy of the former Shire Hall in Watton Street, it does not appear that these early organisations had their own premises.[309] Active clubs in the early twentieth century included the Werribee Club, the Werribee Young Men's Club and the Werribee Cycling Club. The 1st Werribee Boy Scouts began in 1915 and 1st Werribee Girls Guides were formed in 1937.[310]

Ethnic clubs are discussed in Section 3.14.2 'Celebrating culture'.

13.1.3 Entertainment and leisure activities

Feature films without sound, known as 'silent pictures', were screened in the Werribee Mechanics' Institute from c. 1919 under the guise of Werribee Universal Pictures.[311] The Palais Theatre in Werribee opened in 1928 and showed the first 'talking pictures' in 1932 to a large audience, which was reported as 'easily the biggest crowd … ever gathered together in Werribee' .[312]

Towns each had a busy calendar of social events, including balls and dances, and sporting events. Often the public buildings and public reserves were utilised for these purposes.

13.1.4 Traditions, celebrations and festivals

The major celebrations and festive occasions in the early settlement period followed practices that were commonly practised in Britain and Ireland. These included religious days, such as Christmas, Boxing Bay, saints' days, and harvest thanksgiving (for the Protestant churches), as well as other customs, such as New Year's Day and Guy Fawkes' Day. Picnics and sporting events were often held on Boxing Day and

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308 *Williamstown Chronicle*, 12 April 1879, p. 3.

309 The ANA appears not to have had its own building but may have used the shire hall or another suitable public building.

310 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 23 June 1938, p. 2.

311 See advertisement, *Werribee Shire Banner*, 13 November 1919, p. 3.

312 James 1985, p. 114-15; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 28 April 1932, p.5.

Eastern Monday. St Patricks Day (17 March) was a celebration confined to Irish Catholics, with St Patrick's Day sports held each year at Little River. The Scots celebrated Burns Night (25 January) and the occasional Caledonian sports.

In the early 1900s, Arbor Day, celebrated in May, and Wattle Day, celebrated in September, were events in the local state school calendar. Anzac Day was also commemorated in Werribee from the 1920s.

13.2 Providing education

13.2.1 Primary education

From the middle of the nineteenth century, small local schools were established by the emerging communities on the Werribee Plains. Some of these schools were short-lived, while others were shaped by different regimes of government education, adapting to new demands. Initially, schools were mostly attached to local churches: namely the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist or Catholic denominations. An early example was a small Anglican school commenced in 1855 in the Village of Wyndham under the instruction of Miss Armstrong, the daughter of a local publican.[313] In 1858, local families in Werribee successfully petitioned for a national school, and a new building was erected for this purpose on the corner of Mortimer and Werribee streets in 1861.[314]

Prior to the passing of the *Education Act* of 1872, schooling in Victoria was provided by private operators, including churches and individuals, with the government's Denominational School Board funding schools by religious denomination, and the National Board overseeing non-sectarian schools, known as National schools. Denominational schools were subsequently known as Common schools, after the creation of the single Board of Education in 1862.[315] The Wyndham National School and the Rothwell school both became common schools in 1862.[316] These early schools generally provided quarters for the school teacher, either with an attached residence or a separate dwelling on the same site.

A new common school (Figure 80) was built at Truganina in January 1869 from bluestone quarried on William Leake's property.[317] A local school had originally been run by the Church of England and became Truganina Common School in 1863.[318] At Little River, an independent denominational school was commenced with a class of 33 children in 1856, and a Catholic school (St Michael's) was erected in the church grounds near the Little River Railway Station two years later.[319]

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313 James 1985, p. 121

314 James 1985, p. 123.

315 'Education, Prior to 1872', eMelbourne, University of Melbourne, 2008, https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00507b.htm, accessed 27 July 2023.

316 James 1985, p. 124; James 1985, p. 118.

317 A detailed account of Truganina school is given in E.C. Thompson (Head Teacher), 'The History of School No. 192, Truganina', Educational Magazine, vol. 17, no. 10, 1960, reproduced at Wyndham History, 'History of School No 192, Truganina', https://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1553

318 Blake 1973, vol. 3, p. 22; Frances Overmars, pers. comm., November 2020.

319 James 1985, p. 119. Blake 1973, vol. 3, p. 41.

The *Education Act* of 1872 created a new category of government school in Victoria known as a 'state school', and established a requirement for 'free, compulsory and secular' elementary education, which meant that church-run schools were forced either to become financially independent or be converted into state schools. Most of the first 'state schools' in the district simply took over the existing government-funded schools — including those at Truganina (1872); Tarneit (1875); Werribee (1873); and Little River (1877), with Little River periodically absorbing the earlier school, Rothwell (later Little River) Common School.[320] State schools in country areas continued to provide accommodation for the teacher. St Michael's Catholic School at Little River was forced to close temporarily in 1877 with the cessation of government funding to Catholic schools, and the Catholic students were accommodated at the local state school.[321] After re-opening, the school closed again in the late 1890s.

Figure 80 Truganina Common School, built in 1868-69 and destroyed by fire in 1969.
Source: Lost Werribee Facebook Page

New developments in the Werribee area from the late 1880s, which included tenant farming at Werribee Park (1888), the construction and operation of the Metropolitan Sewerage Farm (1890s), and the Closer Settlement schemes of the early 1900s, led to population growth and demands for additional schools. The Metropolitan Farm State School was established in the 1900s.[322] The Werribee Estate State School, established in 1915 on Duncans Road, later became Werribee South State School. Further south, the largely soldier settler population on Diggers Road School agitated for a state school, which commenced in 1927.[323]

A Catholic school continued to operate in Werribee into the 1900s, but without a suitable permanent building. A new school building was opened by Archbishop Mannix in 1920. The school was expanded in 1950, following a large increase in student numbers in the postwar period. [324]

Other existing buildings were adapted for educational use as demand required. The Soldiers' Memorial Hall in Werribee South, for example, also served as an interim state school on Diggers Road from 1927

320 Blake 1973, vol. 3, pp. 22, 41, 45, 68, 78.

321 Blake 1973, vol. 3, p. 32.

322 James 1985, p. 119.

323 Blake 1973, vol. 3, pp. 127, 144.

324 St Andrews Catholic School Werribee, https://www.sawerribee.catholic.edu.au/our-school/our-history/

until 1935 when the school moved to a new site in Diggers Road.[325] Schools in the Wyndham municipality have seen considerable change; some have endured but many early schools have been lost, including Truganina State School (former Common School), which was lost in a bushfire in 1969.

13.2.2 Secondary education

Before the 1920s, there was not a great demand for secondary schooling in the area. Most children finished school at the end of Grade 8 and either assisted on the family farm, found employment, or learned a trade. Prior to the establishment of a high school at Werribee, the closest secondary education for local children was at Melbourne or Geelong.

Werribee Higher Elementary School (HES) was opened on Duncans Road in the early 1920s to provide additional secondary classes (past Grade 8) as a continuation of Werribee State School No. 649. The school was erected on 5 acres of land that was gifted to the Education Department by George Chirnside.[326] The Werribee HES was constructed at a cost of £3000 and was officially opened in 1923 by Sir Alexander Peacock, former Premier of Victoria and the Minister for Education.[327]

Higher elementary schools did not offer Leaving or Matriculation, which meant there was local agitation for a high school in Werribee. The local population had steadily increased in the 1940s and 1950s which put more pressure on the public education. The Werribee Higher Elementary School continued until 1955, when the new Werribee High School opened on Duncan's Road which went through to Matriculation (Year 12). The school occupied 10 acres of land that had been purchased by the Education Department. Initially occupying temporary buildings, a new school building was completed in 1959 and was officially opened in 1961.[328] Werribee High School served the wider district, bringing children in from Little River and further afield. The school has expanded greatly to accommodate the ongoing growth of the local student population.[329] In the postwar period army huts were used at several schools to provide additional accommodation, including Werribee High School.[330]

A Catholic convent was built in Werribee in 1912 when the St Josephs were invited to teach at the local Catholic school. A new convent was built in 1968-69 to a design by local architect M. John Flynn.[331] The Sisters of St Joseph commenced Catholic secondary education in Werribee in 1970, when they opened the Mary MacKillop Girls' College.[332] The school later became co-educational to meet the demand for Catholic education in the fast-growing suburbs of Werribee. In the 1990s, the school was joined by a second Catholic secondary school at Tarneit, Thomas Carr College.

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325 Blake 1973, vol. 3, p. 144; Baragwanath 2015.

326 *Argus*, 5 May 1923, p. 27; Murray 1974, p. 93.

327 *Table Talk*, 24 May 1923, p. 26.

328 *Argus*, 5 May 1923, p. 27; Murray 1974, p. 93; Blake 1973, vol. 3, pp. 236–37.

329 Werribee Secondary College 2020, History, www.werribeesc.vic.edu.au.

330 Blake, vol. 3, pp. 127, 237. Werribee South State School also used an army hut.

331 Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'M John Flynn', Dictionary of Unsung Architects, http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_flynn.html

332 MacKillop College Werribee, Our Story, www.mackillopwerribee.com.au.

In 1977, Williamstown Grammar School purchased a substantial parcel of land on Sayers Road in Truganina to build a campus additional to their earlier site on The Strand in Williamstown.[333] Now known as Westbourne Grammar School, the school has extended its initial buildings and remains in Truganina.

To meet the needs of the growing Islamic community in the City of Wyndham and surrounds, the private Islamic school, Al Taqwa College, was established on 50 acres of land on Sayers Road in 1986. Commencing with 25 students, the school has grown substantially, and now has a horticultural and agricultural campus in Tarneit.[334] Good News Lutheran College was established at Tarneit in 1997.

13.2.3 Early childhood education

With the growth in population and the rising understanding of the importance of early childhood education in the post-war period, a number of preschools and kindergartens were established in the municipality in the second half of the twentieth century. Kindergartens were built at Vincent Street, Werribee, as part of the Devon Park Estate, and in Little River (1950s). The rapid growth of Werribee and Hoppers Crossing in the postwar decades of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s also saw growth in the provision of kindergartens and pre-schools in the area..

13.2.4 Tertiary education

There were particularly strong links in the Werribee district between local state education and key areas of work and industry of the area. Although not strictly an educational facility, the State Research Farm, established in 1912,played a significant part in early agricultural education in Victoria.

Teaching was an early focus for this institution. From 1917, for example, state school teachers were trained in agricultural education at the Werribee Demonstration Farm, State Research Farm.[335] In 1919 returned soldier settlers were also provided with training in farming at the State Research Farm. From 1920 until the 1940s, students of Dookie Agricultural College undertook their second residential year at the State Research Farm, Werribee. In 1922, accommodation for students was erected at the site.[336] A School of Dairy Technology (Figure 81) opened at the Werribee Research Farm in 1939 to provide up-to-date scientific training for those working in dairy industry.[337] In 1984, the Gilbert Chandler College of Dairy Technology was incorporated into the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture (VCAH), a multi-campus institution comprising six of Victoria's Agricultural Colleges.[338] the site became the part of the Food Research Institute in 1988, and part of the University of Melbourne Institute of Land and Food Resources.

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333 Westbourne Grammar School, History, www.westbournegrammar.com.

334 Al Taqwa College, History of Al-Taqwa, www.al-taqwa.vic.edu.au.

335 *Weekly Times*, 3 February 1917, p. 25; *Weekly Times*, 8 March 1919, pp. 26-27.

336 Lindsay Falvey and Barrie Bardsley 1997, 'Land and Food: Agricultural and related education in the Victorian Colleges and the University of Melbourne', no page numbers.

337 *Weekly Times*, 1 July 1939, p. 22.

338 GOTafe, Annual Report 2020, https://gotafe-craft-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/GOTAFE_2020_Annual_Report_Tabled-in-parliment.pdf, p 11, Accessed 9 February 2023.

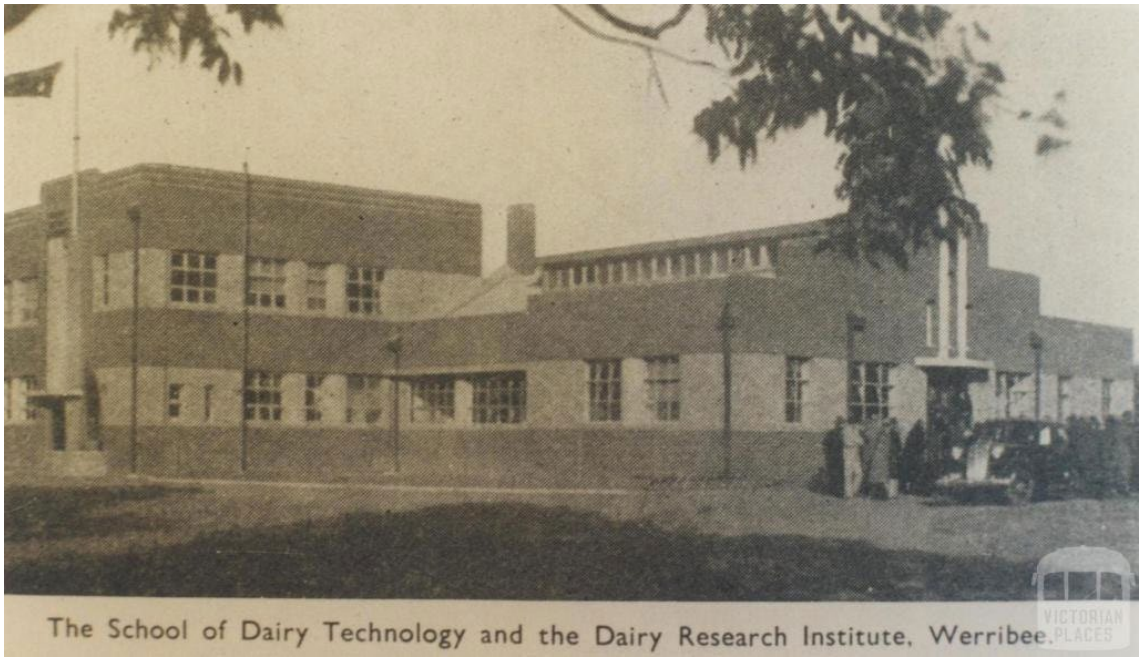

Figure 81 School of Dairy Technology with attached factory
Source: John Young Collection, Victorian Places, V2221,
https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/node/68095

The University of Melbourne School of Veterinary Science established a Werribee campus in the 1960s as a clinical centre but also to provide research and teaching opportunities.[339] The W.T. Kendall Hall was opened in 1967 as a hall of residence for students of veterinary science at Werribee.

Victorian University of Technology established a campus south of Hoppers Crossing in the early 2000s.[340]

13.3 Establishing places of worship

Settlers brought their religious affiliations with them to the new colony and in what is now the City of Wyndham most of the major Christian denominations were represented. As well as Anglicans and Presbyterians, there was a significant number of Primitive Methodists in the district in the early period of settlement. Early church services were held in private homes whenever a religious minister passed through the area. As soon as small centres of population had been established moves were afoot to establish permanent places of worship. As townships developed, purpose-built churches were some of the earliest buildings constructed, including the original St Michael's Catholic church, constructed in 1857 in Little River.

In the early period the religious affiliations of settlers to a large extent correlated with cultural background. With the English-born being the dominant group, Anglicans were more numerous. The first church constructed in Werribee was St Thomas's Anglican Church, built in 1859 on land donated by Thomas Chirnside. The church, constructed as a simple building in weatherboard, was built largely with further donations from the Chirnside family. This building would remain in use as an Anglican church

339 New Life, https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/culture/community/display/33953-%22new-life%22.

340 'Hoppers Crossing', Victorian Places website.

until 1900, when a larger brick building was completed with further assistance from the Chirnside family.[341] The original timber building, erected in 1859, remains on site.

Another early church was the Baptist Church at Truganina, which was the sole church in that locality in the 1870s. The church occupied a bluestone hall that had been erected in 1862.[342]

Anglican worshippers in Little River had attended services at parsonages until a church was constructed in 1877. This small bluestone church, dedicated to St James, was moved from its original site to the centre of the small township, stone by stone, in the 1890s.[343] At its re-consecration ceremony in 1893, the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne rededicated the church as Christ Church.

Figure 82 Werribee Presbyterian Church, c. 1911.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession no. H96.200/1480

Figure 83 Church of England, Werribee, built in 1900.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession no. H96.200/1482

In response to the region's growing population in the 1970s, the Anglican Church erected further churches in the municipality, such as the Epiphany Anglican Church in Hoppers Crossing.

The influx of Scottish settlers in the 1850s saw the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in towns throughout Wyndham and the broader Western District of Victoria. Presbyterians began meeting in Werribee in the 1850s, making use of the local Church of England church building, which was lent to them for afternoon services. A Presbyterian parish comprising of Lara, Little River and Werribee was later formed under a single minister, and an early timber church was erected in Werribee in the 1860s. The Chirnside family, who were Scots Presbyterians, provided the land and funds for the construction of a new church in Duncans Road, Werribee, in 1884, with Thomas Chirnside laying the foundation stone himself. The Church of St Thomas the Apostle, constructed to a Gothic Revival design by the eminent Geelong architect Alexander Davidson, was accompanied by a manse that was also funded by the Chirnsides. The Presbyterian church site in Werribee was a rare case in Victoria where 'the land, church and manse were funded by one family'.[344] In 1977, when the Uniting Church in Australia was formed

341 Context 1997.

342 Whitworth 1879, p. 474.

343 Little River-Lara Anglican Parish, History, www.laralittleriveranglican.com.

344 Miles Lewis (ed.) 1991, *Victorian Churches*, National Trust of Australia (Vic.), Melbourne, p. 154.

through the amalgamation of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches, the church was renamed the Crossroads Uniting Church.

A Presbyterian church was opened in Truganina in 1907, in an earlier corrugated iron hall that had been built in 1862 and had been used by the Baptist Church. The Truganina Presbyterian Church was in use into the 1960s, when the building was lost in the bushfires of January 1968. The foundation stone of the new St Paul's Presbyterian Church at Little River was laid in June of 1884, the same year as the Presbyterian Church in Werribee.[345] At Little River, Presbyterian services were held in private homes for many years.[346]

The first Little River Methodist Church was constructed in 1869, as a small gabled bluestone structure. The land was granted by the Board of Land and Works in 1868, following a request from the Primitive Methodist Church in Geelong. The initial services were conducted by a clergyman from Geelong, who made regular trips to Little River. The Primitive Methodists, a breakaway group from the Wesleyan Methodists, had a stronghold in the colony, and were thought to have 125 churches across Victoria by 1901.[347] When the Uniting Church in Australia was formed in 1977, the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations of Little River merged to form the Little River Uniting Church.

Figure 84 The bluestone Presbyterian manse in Duncans Road, Werribee, built c. 1884, and photographed in 1966.
Source: J T Collins Collection, H2010.1/4280, State Library of Victoria

345 *Geelong Advertiser*, 17 June 1884, p. 3.

346 Sue and Peter Jones, Little River, pers. comm., November 2020.

347 Context 1997 (Little River Methodist Church).

Catholic settlers, predominantly from Ireland and Scotland, had arrived in the region in the 1850s, and were most concentrated in the Little River area. The group of Scottish Catholics were Gaelic-speaking and had a Gaelic-speaking priest, Fr Ronald Rankin, brought out from the Scottish Highlands.[348] The early Catholic parish stretched as far as Williamstown, and was administered by Fr Rankin, who was the first Scottish Catholic priest in Victoria.

A bluestone church, named St Michael's, was built in Little River in 1857 (Figure 85). Deemed too small following the end of World War I, a bequest from Ewan McIntosh's will saw a new red brick church constructed in 1922, recognising the significant increase in population in the early years of the twentieth century. It was the only debt-free Catholic church in Victoria.[349]

A site for a Catholic church was reserved in Werribee in 1861 and the first church erected in 1868 (1871) built from rough-cut bluestone.[350] It was dedicated to St Andrew on account of the prevalence of Scottish Catholics in the region. The original St Andrew's Church became an ancillary building, and possibly served as St Andrew's Hall, when it was replaced with the present red brick building in the 1890s, and this was in turn extended in 1938. An Edwardian-era convent building and a Catholic primary school, built in the 1920s, completed the complex of Catholic buildings.

Figure 85 Undated photograph of the 1857 St Michael's Catholic Church building
Source: Little River Historical Society

348 Ian Wynd 1981, *So Fine a Country: A history of the Shire of Corio*, p. 127.

349 Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. comm., April 2021.

350 Murray 1974, p. 85.

The Catholic Church became a significant social force in the municipality from the 1920s, when the Chirnside's Werribee Park was purchased to establish the Corpus Christi Seminary. Purchased by the Catholic Church for the sum of £70,000 in 1922, the building was adapted for use as a seminary in March 1923, with a full staff of Jesuit priests. The seminary was responsible for training priests for Victoria and Tasmania, along with other dioceses, and swelling enrolments saw significant additions to the original building in 1925 and 1937. A decline in the number of men joining the Catholic priesthood in the 1960s led to the closure of Werribee Park for use by Corpus Christi in 1973.[351]

The influx of a greater number of Catholics into Werribee South from the 1920s, including a large number of Italian immigrants, necessitated the opening of a Catholic church in that locality. In 1938 a timber church, relocated from Lara, was erected opposite the Diggers' Hall, and dedicated as St Mary's.[352] Further Catholic churches, such as St Peter's and St James', both in Hoppers Crossing, were built in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the fast-growing suburban population in the eastern part of the municipality.

Many of the Orthodox Christian denominations were also established in the region following the arrival of large numbers of postwar European migrants, including for example new arrivals from Macedonia.

The latter portion of the twentieth century saw a diversification in the communities drawn to the municipality, bringing other forms of religious worship. The Islamic community has grown substantially in the area, reflected in the construction of the Al Taqwa Mosque, the Melbourne Grand Mosque and the Virgin Mary Mosque, amongst others.

The Hindu and Sikh communities have also become established in the City of Wyndham since the early 2000s, particularly in the suburbs of Point Cook, Tarneit and Truganina. These communities have erected places of worship throughout the municipality. In recent years, Buddhists have established communities within the municipality, including a monastery in Point Cook.

13.4 Community buildings

13.4.1 Public halls and mechanics institutes

Public halls and mechanics institutes were erected in most towns, even the smaller settlements. Public halls, such as shire halls, were often constructed by the local Council. Before a public hall was available in early communities, some local schools were used for meetings and other public purposes. Mechanics institutes became popular in Victoria in the 1850s, born of the idea that working men ('mechanics') should improve themselves through reading, lectures and learning new skills. They usually incorporated a meeting hall and free library, and many had additional rooms for games and entertainment, as well as a rear service area. They became a mainstay in most towns around Victoria, taking pride of place on main streets.

The original Wyndham Shire Hall (1866-7, HO115) was used for a range of local events from the late 1860s, including public meetings.[353] The second Shire Hall was built in 1893 at the corner of Watton Street and Duncans Road. Although no longer used for local government purposes, it is legally required

351 Corpus Christi College 2020, Our History, www.corpuschristicollege.org.au.

352 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 14 July 1938, p. 2.

353 James 1985; May 1989.

to remain in community use.[354] It is now occupied by the Werribee District Historical Society. A new public hall was erected by the Shire of Werribee in 1963, the year of the municipal centenary, and was named Centenary Hall.[355]

The Little River Assembly Hall, erected in the 1860s and destroyed by fire in the 1880s,[356] was one of the earliest community halls in the district. It was built on private property but was used as a de facto public hall, and provided a venue for social gatherings, musical events and balls.[357] A timber building operating as a mechanics institute and free library replaced the assembly hall in 1910, and it continues to function as a public borrowing library after 110 years.[358]

Figure 86 Werribee Mechanics Institute, photographed c. 1911
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession No. H96.200/1479

Figure 87 Little River Mechanics Institute and Free Library.
Source: Little River Mechanics Institute website

The Werribee Mechanics Institute was built in 1887, comprising a timber hall with an ornate façade, to a design by C J Polain. Early donations were provided by the wealthy families in the district, including the Chirnsides, Staughtons and Clarkes. Andrew Chirnside was one of three trustees, donating £200 as well as a large number of books (400 books) that he reputedly purchased in England.[359] A free library was operational by 1886. By 1925, the hall was considered out-of-date and extensive additions were made. The building also operated as the town's picture theatre, a role that ceased when the Palais Theatre opened in 1928. The building was relocated in 1964, and demolished in 1994.[360]

354 WDHS website – Second Shire Hall.

355 James 1985, p. 56; Baragwanath and James 2015, p. 612.

356 See newspaper references, 1868, 1869.

357 See, for example, *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 23 May 1874, p. 3.

358 Baragwanath and James 2015, pp. 345-46; Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. comm., April 2021.

359 Baragwanath and James 2015, pp. 611-12; James 1985, p. 55; Murray 1974, p. 81.

360 'Mechanics Institute, Corner Watton and Bridge Streets, Werribee', Wyndham History, http://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1315, accessed 21 June 2023.

The Truganina Hall, a simple gabled timber building, was built in 1907-08 on a site reserved for this purpose.[361] The hall was administered by a committee of local trustees and was widely used by the local community — as a local school, for church services, and for a range of social and musical events. When the hall was destroyed by fire in 1968 the trustees continued to maintain the site but no replacement hall was built.[362] The former Werribee Air Raid Precaution Hall, referred to as the ARP (Air Raid Protection) Hall (HO125), was later relocated to Truganina for use there as a community building.[363] The ARP Hall had been erected in 1915 as the Werribee power house that operated the local electricity scheme.[364]

A hall was constructed in Duncans Road, Werribee South in 1919. It was established by the Church of England for the convenience of residents of Duncans Road residents'. for the Werribee South committee, It was used frequently by community groups for meetings and for social functions.[365] The Cocoroc Public Hall was built in response to the growing population of workers at the Metropolitan Farm from the mid-1890s.[366] Originally erected in c. 1906, the hall was burned down in 1926 but rebuilt in 1927. The hall played a significant role in social life in the town, hosting dances, wedding receptions, school concerts and card games, as well as serving as the town's library.[367] The Werribee Girl Guides used the former Cocoroc South state school building, following its relocation to Werribee in the c. 1970s.[368]

Figure 88 Truganina Hall was erected in 1908 and destroyed by fire in January 1968.
Source: Lost Werribee Facebook Page

Figure 89 Former Werribee ARP Hall, relocated to Truganina for use as a community hall.
Source: Wyndham History website

361 *Independent* (Footscray), 28 September 1907, p. 2. Claimed that site was reserved for the purpose; this needs to be checked.

362 Baragwanath and James 2015, p. 581.

363 James and Pritchard 2008, p. 63.

364 WDHS website – Werribee Power House.

365 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 16 October 1919, p. 2 and 13 May 1920, p. 2.

366 Baragwanath and James 2015, p. 612.

367 Melbourne Water 2020, Cocoroc township, www.melbournewater.com.au.

368 See newspaper article, Lost Werribee Facebook Page, WDHS.

Rapid residential development in the postwar meant that new areas did not always have community facilities. At Hoppers Crossing, locals constructed a makeshift public hall using two RAAF huts purchased from the RAAF base at Laverton.[369]

The City of Wyndham has seen the construction of multiple modern libraries from the 1990s. A public library was constructed at Werribee Plaza in 1993, and most recently the Julia Gillard Library, named after the first female prime minister of Australia, was opened in Tarneit in 2015.

13.4.2 Soldiers' memorial halls and RSL clubs

The Werribee Sub-branch of the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia was formed following a meeting of eighteen returned servicemen in the shire hall in July 1919. The boundary for the sub-branch was defined as the area within a 12-mile radius of the Werribee Post Office.[370] Although plans were made in the following month to erect clubrooms for the group, they were not immediately realised — instead, the group met at various halls and at the Werribee Mechanics Institute. In 1920 the Werribee RSL had requested that the Shire Council guarantee the cost of a soldiers' clubrooms in the town.[371] Whilst an RSL clubrooms or local soldiers' hall was not forthcoming in Werribee in the early 1920s, the Presbyterian Church of St Thomas built its own soldiers' memorial hall, with funding presumably donated by George T. Chirnside.[372]

The soldier settlement scheme attracted a large number of returned servicemen to the Werribee South area. Strong demand for a local meeting place led to the purchase in 1923 of one acre of land on Diggers Road for the erection of a soldiers' memorial hall. The hall was opened by George T. Chirnside on Anzac Day, 1925.[373] In the absence of any other public venue in Werribee South, the Diggers' Hall, as it was known, was used for a range of other local purposes, including Italian political meetings in the 1930s.[374] In 1928 a public library was planned for the Diggers Hall.[375]

The end of World War II saw a resurgence in membership at the Werribee RSL sub-branch. In 1947, with help from the shire council, land was purchased in Kelly Park for the construction of a soldiers' memorial hall and club rooms.[376] Work began on the hall in 1957, and the Governor of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks, officially opened the Werribee RSL Hall in November 1958.[377]

13.4.3 Senior citizens' clubs

Since the 1870s, efforts were made in Victoria to assist the welfare of the elderly whose final years often ended in poverty and illness. Where family support wasn't possible, a lack of government support often resulted in poverty for those entering their final years. Some philanthropic groups, often connected to

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369 See Wyndham History, www.wyndhamhistory.net.au.

370 James 1985, p. 104.

371 *Weekly Times*, 10 July 1920, p. 30.

372 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 1 September 1921, p. 3; James and Pritchard, 2008, p. 90.

373 *Il Giornale Italiano*, 22 August 1934, p. 7; Context 1997.

374 James 1985, p. 105.

375 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 17 May 1928, p. 7 and 14 July 1938, p. 2.

376 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 25 September 1947, p. 2.

377 James 1985, p. 105.

churches, provided care to the elderly in this period, however the depression of the 1890s undid much of the progress these groups had made. The Victorian Government introduced the country's first aged pensions in 1900.[378]

The depression of the 1890s and the Great Depression of the early 1930s resulted in social upheaval and the social and financial isolation of many senior citizens. This led to the development of senior citizens clubs in some towns and suburbs. Many municipalities took on welfare programs for its senior citizens, often providing facilities, regular meals and later, in-house care.[379] Senior citizens' welfare programs were implemented on a widespread scale in Victoria throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with particular encouragement provided by the government's contribution to funding local municipalities to establish centres for themselves. Senior citizens clubs became the 'obvious focus' in the provision of elderly welfare.[380]

In Werribee, the local council built a senior citizens' club in Kelly Park in the 1970s. In 1975 the local Rotary club built a senior citizens' residential home, Manor Court, in Hogan Street, Werribee, designed by local architect John Flynn.[381]

Local ethnic and cultural groups also established their own senior citizens services in Werribee, including the Macedonian Senior Citizens Club in Werribee and the Werribee Polish Senior Citizens Club.

13.5 Hospitals and public health

13.5.1 Hospitals

As the region became increasingly populated, so too did the need for the provision of medical services. In the earliest periods, it is likely that residents relied on local midwifes and nurses and visiting doctors. Early hospitals in Geelong and Melbourne were within reach for the most urgent cases.

In the absence of public hospitals, small private hospitals operated in Werribee. Often these hospitals occupied a converted dwelling and were operated by a matron and attended by visiting doctors. An example was Nurse Higgin's Private Hospital, which was noted in 1908 for being 'especially adapted for persons of moderate means'.[382] Another was Avilion Private Hospital in Cherry Street, which was operating in the 1920s and 1930s.[383] In the 1920s the bush nursing movement gained sway in the country areas of Victoria, with bush nursing services established at the Werribee South Irrigation Settlement in the early 190s. Sister E. Edgecombe was one of the early bush nurses based there in the 1920s.[384]

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378 Swain 2008, 'Old Age' in eMelbourne.

379 Municipal Association of Victoria 2016, *New Futures for Senior Citizen Centres and Clubs: A report for local government*, Municipal Association of Victoria, Melbourne.

380 Hannah Lewi 2010, 'Lawn Bowls: A community game' in Hannah Lewi and David Nichols (eds) 2010, *Community: Building modern Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney.

381 Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'John Flynn', Dictionary of Unsung Architects, http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_flynn.html

382 *Age*, 14 November 1908 p. 9.

383 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 25 March 1926, p. 2.

384 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 28 September 1922, p. 2; *Advocate*, 25 November 1926, p. 34.

These small private medical establishments became increasingly more permanent in the following decades as the population of the area significantly climbed, and in 1946 it was noted that 'Werribee has had a [permanent] private hospital for 25 years'.[385] The most notable of these was the Wandene Hospital, run by Dr C.H. Prouse, which had opened in c. 1935 in a Victorian villa on Synnott Street that had originally been built by Francis Beamish. When Wandene Hospital was threatened with closure due to financial difficulties in 1946, calls for the construction of a community hospital intensified.[386] The Werribee Progress Association set up a volunteer ambulance service by the 1940s.[387]

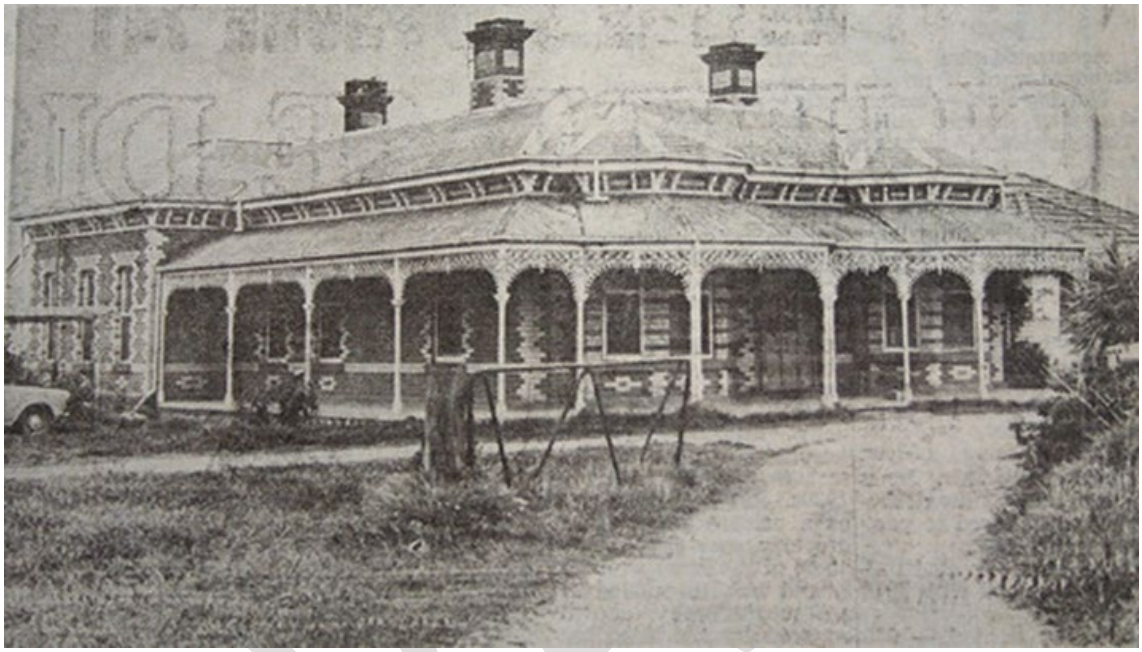

Figure 90 Wandene private hospital in Synnot Street, Werribee, was the former Beamish residence. Source: Werribee and District Historical Society

The Werribee District Hospital was opened on 9 September 1962. The new hospital contained 22 beds, a matron's flat, and four staff homes, and its construction was due largely in part to the fundraising efforts of the local community.[388]

In 1994, the Werribee District Hospital was replaced with the Werribee Mercy Hospital on Hoppers Lane. The Werribee Mercy Hospital has undergone many expansions since opening, to cater for the rapid growth of the surrounding population.

During the Second World War, the former Chirnside house known as 'The Manor' was used as a temporary RAAF hospital, servicing the nearby RAAF airforce base. Aviation medicine has been taught at the Point Cook RAAF Base for many years.

385 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 28 February 1946, p. 1.

386 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 28 February 1946, p. 1.

387 *Weekly Times*, 12 May 1948, p. 21.

388 Wyndham History, 'Werribee District Hospital, Synnot Street', www.wyndhamhistory.net.au.

Figure 91 The Werribee District Hospital, shortly after opening in September 1962.
Source: 'Werribee District Hospital, Synnot Street', Wyndham History

13.5.2 Managing epidemics and infectious diseases

In 1882, an infectious diseases sanatorium was constructed by the Central Board of Health near the mouth of the Kororoit Creek. Known as the Cut-Paw-Paw (or Newport) Sanatorium, it had been funded largely by the surrounding municipalities, including Wyndham (as it was known at the time) and Williamstown.[389] The sanatorium was pivotal in the control of diseases such as smallpox in Victoria, and was known to have dealt with sporadic cases of the Bubonic Plague.

As was the case elsewhere in Victoria (and many parts of Australia), the Werribee district was impacted by the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1919-20. In preparation for its inevitable arrival in the area, the local council repurposed the Werribee Mechanics Institute as an 'isolation hospital,' and an estimated 400 residents in the district were vaccinated within the first week of February.[390]

The City of Wyndham was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The town of Little River was subject to two different sets of restrictions because the City of Wyndham (on the east side of the river) was deemed to be within metropolitan Melbourne whereas the City of Greater Geelong (on the west side) was not.

13.5.3 Infant welfare

Moves to improve infant welfare in Victoria led to the formation of the Victorian Baby Health Centres Association in 1918. Infant welfare relied on new teachings about the scientific management of children, which focused on nutrition, hygiene and the importance of a daily routine. The necessity of infant welfare education in regional Victoria was highlighted in 1924, when government funded 'mothercraft lectures' were offered to young mothers from a train carriage visiting regional towns. This early intervention into infant and child welfare, as well as maternal health and welfare, encouraged local

389 Hobsons Bay Libraries 2015, Early Institutions, www.libraries.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

390 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 6 February 1919, p. 2.

councils to fund such programs on a permanent basis.[391] Between 1900 and 1945, Australia saw 'an extraordinary' decrease in infant mortality, which is directly related to the rise in infant welfare causes.[392] Werribee Shire Council opened the district's first baby health centre in the shire hall in 1939.[393] A similar service was also established at Little River by 1945.

The subsequent postwar 'baby boom' and the influx of immigrants to the area placed additional pressure on health and welfare services as well as housing. This encouraged the development of municipal buildings, including purpose-built infant welfare centres, that catered to the needs of the burgeoning population.[394] A new purpose-built facility at Werribee, comprising an infant welfare centre and pre-school centre, was planned in 1951.[395]

By 1982 there was an infant welfare centre (and preschool) at Hoppers Crossing and at Wyndham Vale.[396]

Figure 92 The Committee of the Little River Baby Health Centre in 1949.
Source: *Weekly Times*, 27 April 1949, p. 22

13.5.4 Burials and cemeteries

With a lack of dedicated cemeteries n the earliest period of settlement, burials often took place close to a settlement such as a homestead or farmhouse. Several burials, for example, took place on the Chirnside's estate on the Werribee River in the 1840s before a formal cemetery was established (Figure 93). There were also burials at May Farm, Truganina.

391 Darian-Smith and Wills 2010, pp. 26-27.

392 Darian-Smith and Wills 2010, p. 28.

393 *Argus*, 20 July 1939, p. 2.

394 Darian-Smith and Willis 2010, p. 47.

395 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 19 July 1951, p. 2.

396 May 1989, chapter 5.

Public or general cemeteries were established in the municipality through the nineteenth century. The term 'general cemetery' was defined in the Cemetery Act (NSW) of 1850 as a burial ground that catered for all Christian denominations (and often other faith groups, including Jews). A site for a public cemetery in Werribee (then known as Wyndham) was temporarily reserved in 1864, the same year that the Shire of Wyndham was formed.[397] The cemetery reserve comprised 13 acres within Crown allotment 25, located on the north side of the Geelong and Melbourne railway line.[398] Trees were donated by the Chirnsides and a caretaker's cottage was erected (see HO77).

A public cemetery at Little River, known as the Rothwell Cemetery, was reserved in 1859 and trustees appointed. This cemetery is situated outside of the City of Wyndham, approximately 1.5 kilometres west of the Little River.[399] A four acre site was reserved in Truganina for a cemetery in 1864.[400] The 1879 burial at this cemetery of prominent early resident, William Leake, was associated with the 'largest ever' funeral seen in the district.[401] Although this cemetery remains publicly accessible, it is closed for new burials (see HO39).

There are a large number of graves of Italian immigrants at the Werribee Cemetery, particularly those representing the Sicilian community who settled at Werribee Park in the 1920s.[402]

Figure 93 Small private cemetery at Werribee Park, enclosed with bluestone wall. Source: John T. Collins collection, State Library Victoria, Accession no. H98.251/2747

Figure 94 Truganina Cemetery, 2019. Source: DELWP

397 *VGG*, 18 October 1864, p. 2337.

398 Context 1997.

399 *VGG*, 22 July 1859, p. 1533.

400 'Truganina Cemetery', Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, https://www.gmct.com.au/our-locations/truganina-cemetery, accessed 31 July 2023.

401 *Bacchus Marsh Express,* 18 October 1879, p. 4.

402 Maria Mantello 1986, *Now and Then: The Sicilian farming community at Werribee Park 1929-49*.

13.6 Community organisations and service clubs

With of the municipality remaining rural through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, community organisations provided important services to the residents of Wyndham. These groups often operated from existing public spaces, including halls.

Many country towns established progress associations in the early twentieth century to try to offset the impact of rural decline and to stimulate local economies. Progress associations were formed in Werribee (1909)), and later at Little River (1923) and Truganina (c. 1923), and these groups agitated for practical improvements in the townships, particularly during the interwar period.[403] In 1920, the Werribee Progress Association discussed issues including the proposed swimming pool, construction of homes for 'working men', formation of a bowling green and establishment of a children's playground at Kelly Park.[404] The Truganina Progress Association was concerned with the formation of roads, as well as running sports and dance events for the community.[405] The Little River Progress Association petitioned for electrical and telephone services for the township, and road improvements.[406]

Other community organisations demonstrate the lack of health and other services in these still isolated settlements. A Bush Nursing association was active in Werribee South in the interwar period, established to provide free or low-cost trained district nursing services to country areas.[407] By 1928, the district's nurse, Sister Hill, was making 122 visits to 34 patients, travelling via a horse and cart. Her 'very fine work' was 'highly commended, and the association held regular fundraising events to continue the service.[408] In Little River, a Bush Fire Brigade was formed in 1938.[409]

Through the twentieth century, other community-oriented organisations and societies emerged, including Country Women's Association (c. 1940s), Rotary, Lions and Apex. The Werribee Community Centre Inc. was established in 1974, offering a range of courses to adults. A new Community Centre building was erected in Werribee in 1987, using local timber and handmade bricks. The centre was renamed the Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc. in 2011.[410]

13.7 Immigrant communities

13.7.1 Nineteenth-century immigrants

As was the case through much of the Western District of Victoria, the Scots formed a predominant social group amongst the early immigrants and made up a disproportionate number of the prominent class of squatters.[411] There were also large numbers of Scottish immigrants amongst the servant and labouring

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403 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 14 August 1909, p.2, 3 May 1923, p. 4, and 20 September 1923, p. 7.

404 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 11 March 1920, p. 3.

405 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 3 May 1923, p. 2, 2 January 1930, p. 5, and 13 October 1932, p. 2.

406 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 1 October 1925, p. 6, 19 July 1928, p. 1 and 20 January 1938, p.5.

407 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 14 October 1920, p. 3.

408 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 26 July 1928, p. 5.

409 *Werribee Shire Banner,* 20 January 1938, p.5.

410 Werribee Community Centre, https://westernlearning.org.au/wyndham-community-and-education-centre/; RAF News, 1 January 1987, p. 18.

411 Kiddle 1961, chapter 2.

class; many had obtained passage to Victoria as assisted immigrants in the early 1850s to meet the demand for farm hands and domestic servants on country properties, particularly in western Victoria.

The was a significant number of Scottish and Irish immigrants in the Little River area in the 1850s and 1860s, and they established a Catholic chapel here in 1857. A significant proportion of the Catholic settlers in the Little River area were Scottish, a point that was remarked upon by Archbishop Mannix on his visit to Little River in 1918.[412] Edwin Brady noted in 1918 that there were a number of Irish farmers in the Werribee and Little River area who had been early settlers there and who had prospered.[413]

13.7.2 New arrivals 1900s-1930s

From the 1920s, new settlers were attracted to the area on account of the successful irrigation scheme and ready work. This work was familiar to southern European migrants, including Italian, Maltese, Macedonian and Greeks who moved to the area. Many prospered and bought their own blocks.

Italian immigrants arrived in the Werribee area in the 1920s from the Vizzini area of Sicily who settled at former land of Werribee Park on farming blocks.[414] Many of the soldier settlers who had taken up blocks here after World War I did not prosper. The Italian market gardeners brought valuable skills and created a successful local market gardening industry. They struggled for the first few years, meeting with discrimination and economic hardship, but ultimately demonstrated considerable success. Chinese market gardeners also operated in Werribee, on sites adjacent to the river, including at Cottrell Street and west of the town.[415]

13.7.3 Post-war immigrants

In the mid-1950s, around 60 per cent of the population of Werribee were from Continental Europe and most were working in the market gardening industry.[416] This included new arrivals from Greece, the Netherlands and Slovakia. In the 1980s Vietnamese people settled in the area and worked in food production. More recent arrivals include Filipino, Chinese, Indian and Sri Lankan migrants. Immigrants from Middle Eastern countries have settled in the area.

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412 James 1985, p. 131; Wynd 1981, p. 127.

413 Brady 1918, p. 386.

414 Maria Mantello 1986, *Now and Then: The Sicilian farming community at Werribee Park 1929-49*.

415 *Pers. Comm.*, R Harrigan, Werribee District Historical Society, Wyndham Heritage Review consultation, 2 May 2023; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 21 January 1932, p. 2.

416 *Police Life*, December 1958, p. 8.

Figure 95 Residence and market garden, developed by post-war migrant family, Diggers Road, Werribee South.
Source: Lovell Chen, 2023

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14.0 MILITARY AND DEFENCE

Places related to this theme include:

- RAAF Williams Laverton Base
- Soldiers Memorial Reserve, Werribee

14.1 Establishing a military tradition

The Chirnsides did much to establish and develop Victoria's voluntary military forces through the nineteenth century. The Crimean War of 1854-56 had triggered local fears of invasion, resulting in the formation of the Volunteer Military Forces.[417] In March of 1861, members of the Cavalry, Artillery, Rifle Corps and the Naval Brigade arrived at the Chirnside's Werribee Park estate to participate in the famed Werribee Volunteer Military Encampment. The Chirnside family donated £1000 to be distributed as prizes to the men. Such was the popularity of the encampment that an estimated 10,000 spectators arrived by rail to watch the military drills and 'sham fight', with a reputed total of almost 18,000 people, including the volunteers, present for the opening occasion.[418] The encampment became an annual affair in the following years, with grandstands, tents and other amenities erected to cater to the crowds.

Figure 96 Photograph by Davies & Co. taken at the military encampment at Werribee Park in 1861. Men in military uniforms are standing behind a row of well-dressed women spectators. Tents are visible in the background.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession No. H4649

417 James 1985, p. 27.

418 James 1985, p. 28.

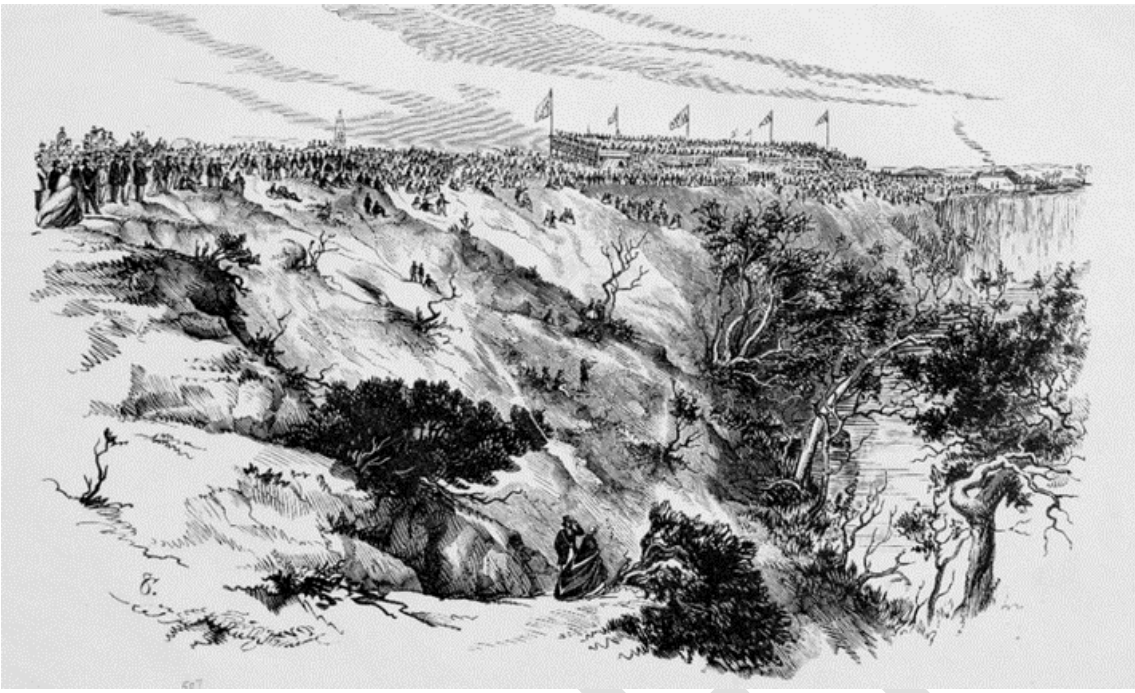

Figure 97 An image of the 'sham fight' at the Werribee Encampment published in the *Newsletter of Australasia* in 1861, showing crowds watching on. A grandstand had been erected at the Encampment to allow spectators a better view.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession No. NLA00/05/62/00

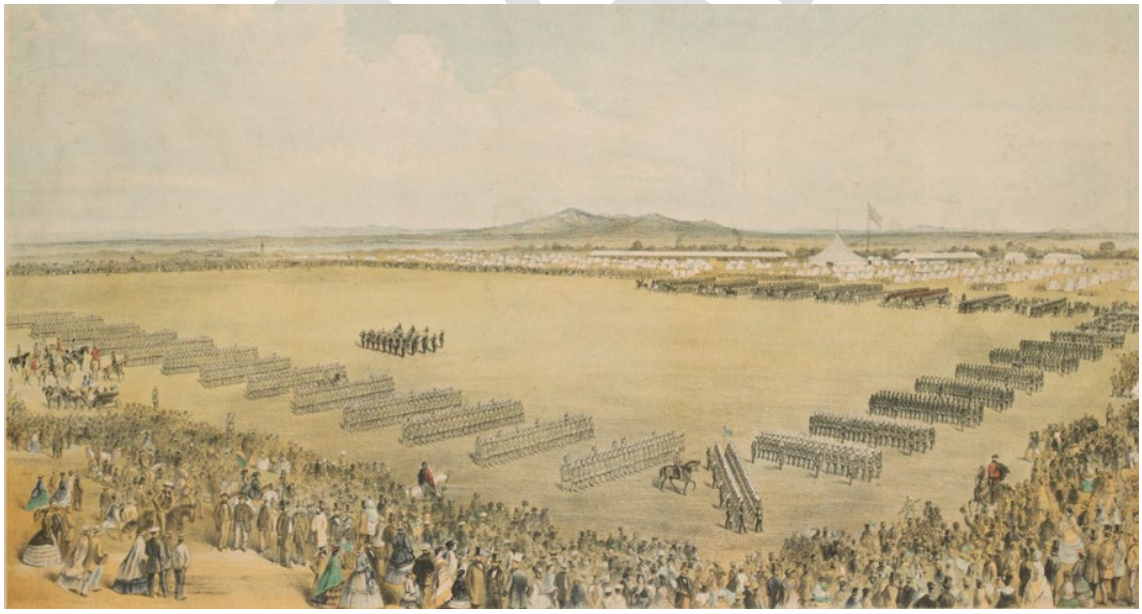

Figure 98 An image of the review of volunteers on the makeshift parade ground at Werribee in 1861. The scale of the event is evidenced by the crowds and arrangement of tents in the background.
Source: Shepherd 1861, 'Review and Encampment of the Victorian Volunteers at Werribee 1st April 1861,' State Library Victoria, Accession No. H4993

The 1880s saw a resurgence in the Chirnsides' military interests in the area. Percy Chirnside, the son of Andrew Chirnside, was commissioned a lieutenant in the Victorian Field Artillery Brigade in June 1887.[419] In 1889, Andrew Chirnside partially funded the cost of raising and maintaining a half-battery of horse artillery at Werribee, which was left in Percy's command. Andrew provided for the horses and stables, as well as the uniforms, drill hall and part of the military instructor's wages. Percy later went to England to complete further training and was promoted to captain in 1893.[420] Percy Chirnside played a pivotal role in the military activities in the district. In conjunction with Sir William Clarke, Percy Chirnside had maintained the half-battery through to the 1890s, although it was disbanded shortly after he was promoted to captain. In 1897 he funded much of the cost of the military encampment.

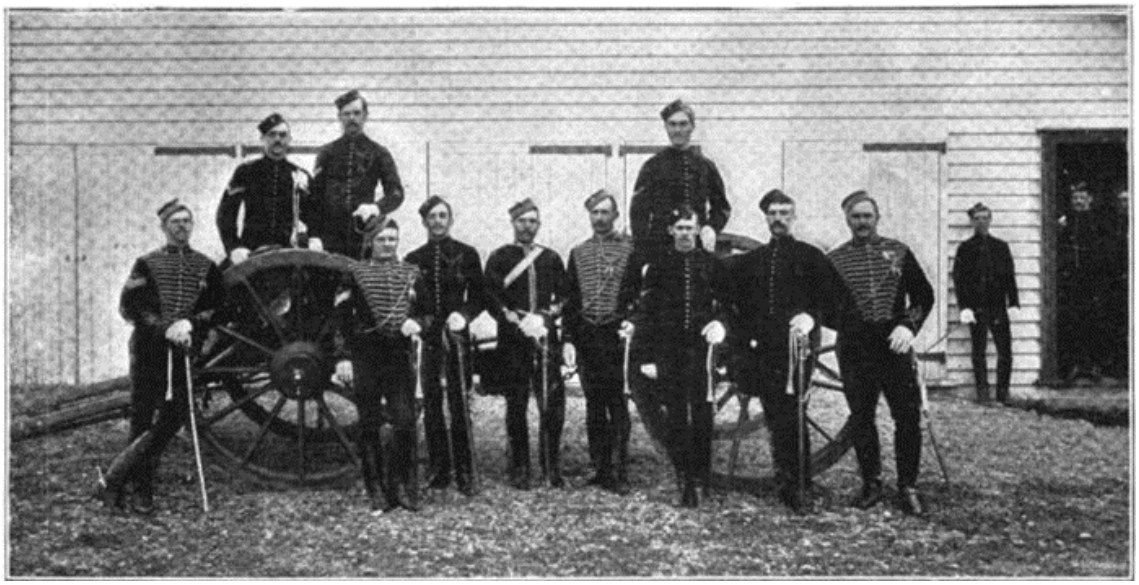

Figure 99 Captain Percy Chirnside poses (centre) with members of the Victorian Half-Artillery at Werribee Park, 1893.
Source: *The Sketch*, 4 October 1893, p. 534

Chirnside hosted an Empire Day celebration in 1907 for schoolboy cadets, drawn from the major private schools in the state. The day included battalion drills and a mock battle, and Chirnside was responsible for funding a specially commissioned train trip for the 700 cadets that arrived in Werribee.[421]

419 Heather Ronald 1979, 'Chirnside, John Percy (1865–1944)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/.

420 Ronald 1979.

421 James 1985, p. 79.

Figure 100 Schoolboy cadets at Werribee, 1907.
Source: *Leader*, 12 June 1907

14.2 Military aviation

In c. 1913 an air base was established on the flat and open country at Point Cook close to the beach. The site was chosen both because of its proximity to the coastline and its proximity to Melbourne. Following the outbreak of World War I, this site was adapted as a military aviation camp in 1916, with a number of buildings and tents were erected.[422] It became an RAAF base and the first pilot training school in Victoria. World War I was the first overseas conflict where air attacks were used and it was here that the Australian military were trained in aviation.

Percy Chirnside's former residence, The Manor, was used as an RAAF hospital during World War II Wooloomanata Station, Little River (outside the study area), was also used by the RAAF.

The RAAF airbase was an important military operation during the Second World War. Various structures were erected in the area by the RAAF during wartime, including several aircraft hangars. The RAAF continued to provide employment through the twentieth century.

14.3 Italian prisoners-of-war

Wartime created fears and tensions about the loyalty of some Australians who foreign nationals – namely those born in Germany and Italy. As had been the experience for Germans during World War I, Italians as well as Germans were suspected as 'enemy aliens' during World War II. In 1940, around 70 Italian-born market gardeners from the Werribee district were arrested under the Enemy Alien Act in 1940 and placed initially in the prisoner-of-war camp at Tatura in northern Victoria.[423] The absence of these men placed a strain on their families and impacted on the vegetable-growing in Werribee South. They received support from the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix.

14.4 War memorials

Memorials to those who served in World War I were erected soon after the war in Werribee. In 1919 donations were sought for the Werribee Soldiers' Permanent Memorial in 1919. A simple stone obelisk

422 *Australasian*, 9 September 1916, p. 20.

423 James 1985, p. x.

was unveiled in Watton Street in 1920 and a memorial garden later established.[424] The first trees in the Werribee Avenue of Honour, which were Eucalypts, were planted in August 1918; the ceremony commenced with the children from Werribee State School children marching to the site accompanied by the beat of a drum.[425]

Located to the south-east of the centre of Werribee township, the triangular Soldiers Memorial Reserve (Figure 101) was established as a recreation reserve, part of the 200 acres donated by George T Chirnside to the Repatriation Department at the end of World War I.[426] The reserve was to be placed under joint control of the Wyndham Council and the Returned Soldiers' Association.[427] Activities at the site in the interwar period included local cricket and football, including the Duncan's Road Cricket Club, the Werribee United Soccer Club.[428] In 1929, the site was reserved for public recreation and temporarily reserved from sale in 1929.[429] By the late 1930s, improvements at the site included trees planted along College Road, and what appears to be a timber pavilion structure, and most of the reserve enclosed by fencing. The Werribee Scout Hall was relocated to the Soldiers' Reserve in 1951 and in the c. mid-1960s, a former school building from Cocoroc was transferred to the site for use as a Guides Hall.[430]

Honour boards were also installed in state schools and churches and other public buildings –examples include the Werribee Church of England and the Little River Mechanics Hall.[431] The Werribee Shire Council commissioned a large honour board, carved in Blackwood, that listed around 400 names of those who served.

To commemorate the centenary of the Great War, the Australian World War I Nurses Memorial was unveiled at Little River in 2015.

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424 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 25 September 1919, p. 2. Authentic Heritage Services 2008, vol. 3, item no. 4530.

425 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 8 August 1918, p. 3.

426 *Weekly Times*, 22 May 1920, p. 9.

427 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 8 November 1923, p. 3.

428 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 3 July 1924, p. 6.

429 Victoria Government Gazette, Gazette 19, 20 February 1929, p. 883, http://gazette.slv.vic.gov.au, accessed 19 August 2019.

430 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 13 December 1951, p. 1; Peter Andrew Barrett, 'Werribee Guides Hall', *City of Wyndham Review of Heritage Sites of Local Interest,* 2004, p. 152.

431 *Melton Express*, 23 December 1916, p. 2; Janet Butler 2013, Kitty's War, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, no page number.

Figure 101 Oblique aerial view of Soldiers' Reserve looking west from Werribee River, c. 1938-1940, showing the visually striking initial planting to the College Road boundary
Source: Airspy Collection, State Library of Victoria

Figure 102 Honour board, Little River Mechanics Hall.
Source: Janet Butler, Kitty's War, 2013

Figure 103 Shire of Werribee First World War honour board, Werribee RSL.
Source: Wyndham History website: www.wyndhamhistory.net.au

Other war-related heritage within the municipality includes a trophy of the First World War is the German howitzer gun that was obtained as a war trophy by the Allies in France in 1918.[432] It was one of

432 Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd 2008, 'Veteran-related Heritage, Vol. 3, item no. 4529.

a large number of enemy guns shipped to Victoria after the war and distributed to local government areas across the state; another howitzer was given to the Soldiers' Memorial Hall in Werribee South but this has now been removed.

There are a wide range of places in Wyndham that are associated with Second World War, including an abandoned munitions site in Truganina and several sites associated with military aircraft, including a satellite aerodrome and a RAAF hut, both in Werribee, and a bombing range in Tarneit.[433] A temporary work camp site of the RAAF/USAAF was established north of the Malby By-pass near Werribee in the early 1940s.[434] There are also several military aircraft wreck sites off the coast, including an RAAF Spitfire Aircraft (wrecked 1942) and a Wirraway (lost 1950s).[435]

The memorial gates at the Little River recreation reserve are a World War II memorial, designed by Little River local Thomas J. Richmond and opened in 1957.[436]

433 Context 1997.

434 Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd 2008, 'Veteran-related Heritage, vol. 3, item number 4535.

435 Authentic Heritage Services Pty Ltd 2008, 'Veteran-related Heritage, vol. 3, item numbers 4532 and 4536.

436 Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. comm., April 2021.

15.0 ADVANCING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Places related to this theme include:

- State Research Farm, Werribee (HO75)

15.1 Promoting scientific knowledge

Early scientific investigations on the Werribee plains involved the study of fossils and geology. Several scientists, including Richard Daintree, made some significant early discoveries about the nature of the country's geological past and its past fauna. Daintree worked with Selwyn on the Geological Survey of Victoria in the 1850s during which time he discovered several fossils of extinct animals in the Werribee area.[437] Investigations by the Victorian government into the productive resources of the colony were also carried out in the 1850s and 1860s, which found some notable coal seams in the area.

15.2 Developing agricultural research

In the Werribee district, a wide expanse of open and relatively flat farming country close to Melbourne provided a well-suited location for the agricultural research and field trials. An early area of endeavour was improving the speed and efficiency of manual farming techniques, which were showcased in local ploughing matches that were popular from the c. 1850s to the 1870s. Field trials and ploughing matches were also a test of the capacity of local ploughmen and local conditions.

Farm machinery was fundamental to optimising efficient and production in farming, and considerable effort was made to test and promote new techniques. In the early 1900s Sunshine Harvester utilised a testing ground at Werribee where trials of new machinery and new components were carried out. In the 1940s the same company, now named H.V. McKay Massey Harris, operated farm equipment manufacture and field trials at a site on Shaws Road, Tarneit.[438]

In the late-nineteenth century, Thomas Chirnside oversaw various agricultural tests and experiments at Werribee Park. In the late 1880s, the Chaffey brothers ran irrigation tests along the Werribee River.[439] Local farmers also came together annually for the Werribee Agricultural Show, and eagerly observed demonstrations of new farming methods.

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437 Baillieres 1870.

438 Museum Victoria, item no. MM 23628, https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/785282

439 Context 1997, p. 11.

Figure 104 Intercolonial Ploughing Match held in Werribee in 1882, published in the Australasian Sketcher, showing a large crowd of spectators. The Werribee Park tower is visible in the background.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession no: A/S12/08/82/2480)

The promotion of closer settlement in Victoria from the early 1900s, and the associated push for efficient and productive agricultural practices, meant that developing improved methods or cropping and animal husbandry was of paramount concern to the government. The State Research Farm was established in 1912 as the Victorian Government's experimental farm and centre for agricultural research.[440] Working closely with the Department of Agriculture, the State Research Farm was critical in providing expert knowledge drawn from experimentation and testing that significantly shaped the development of agriculture in Victoria during the early- to mid-twentieth century in terms of methods and technologies, particularly in the areas of soil science, crop yields, wheat strains, animal health, and overall productivity. Its development of a high quality and smut-free and rust-free strain of wheat by the 1930s proved to be of enormous benefit to the Victorian wheat industry.[441] The encouragement of efficient, productive and prosperous primary producers was strongly tied to the ethos of the 'countryside ideal' that shaped much of public policy about land settlement in the early 1900s and into the 1920s, including closer settlement. The State Research Farm extended its offering of agricultural training to government schoolteachers in 1915 and 1917, including primary schools, high schools and the new agricultural high schools.[442]

440 *Irrigation in Victoria*, Australia, 1915, p. 13.

441 Dingle 1983, p. 194; *Age*, 21 September 1939, p. 24.

442 Marilyn Lake 1988, *The Limits of Hope*, p. 24.

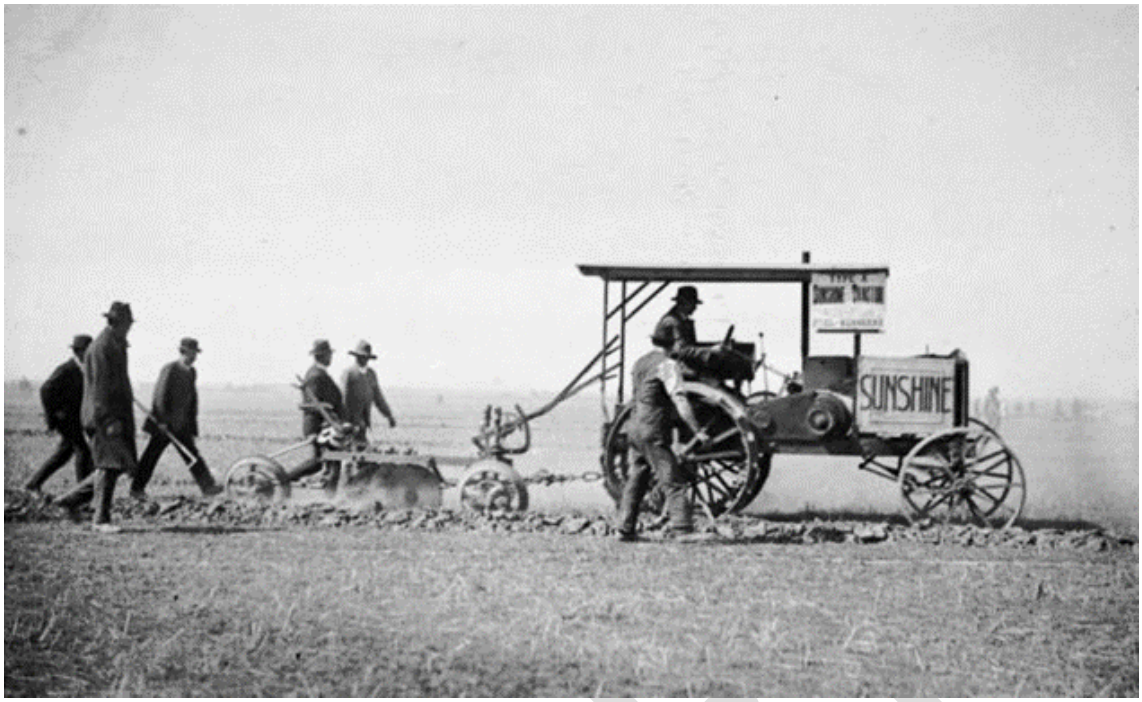

Figure 105 Sunshine Harvester field trials at Werribee, 1918.
Source: Museums Victoria Collections,
https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/784744

During the interwar period, facilities for animal research were further developed in several states, including Victoria and the State Research Farm at Werribee.[443]

In the postwar period, the department's S.S. Cameron Research Laboratory at Werribee achieved international recognition 'for its research on the reproductive physiology of livestock, consistent with the director's personal interest and research achievements in this field.'[444]

The School of Dairy Technology opened at the State Research Farm in 1939. The Arthur Rylah Institute is part of the State Research Farm, which concentrates on agriculture, farming, and biodiversity.

443 Alan W. Bell 2019, 'Animal Science Down Under: A history of research, development and extension in support of Australia's livestock industries', *Animal Production Science*, 60(2) 2019.

444 Russell et al. 2014 cited in Bell 2019.

Figure 106 State Research Farm, Werribee, looking across to the farm sheds and grazing land, c. 1918. Source: E.J. Brady, *Australian Unlimited*, 1918, p. 371

CSIR (later renamed CSIRO), which was the Commonwealth government's scientific research agency, became involved with the Animal Health section of the State Research Farm by 1939.[445] It established its Animal Husbandry Research Centre, Werribee, in the c. 1940s. Later it was known as the Division of Animal Health. In the 1950s the Animal Health Division carried out extensive research into poultry health and productivity.

CSIRO originally occupied a large site north of the railway line that had been acquired by the Commonwealth. It relocated closer to the State Research Farm in the c1980s or 90s. It has been renamed CSIRO Food Innovation Centre.

15.3 Veterinary science and zoology

The University of Melbourne's Faculty of Veterinary Science was established at Werribee in the 1940s – it was the first veterinary school in Australia.

The Werribee site for Melbourne Zoo was acquired by the Victorian Government in the 1890s from the Chirnsides' estate as an additional area for the Melbourne Zoo. It was opened to the public as an Open Range Zoo in the 1980s.[446] Some of the mature plantings that predate the use of the site as the Open Range Zoo are associated with the Chirnside era.

445 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 9 March 1939, p. 4.

446 Catherine de Courcy 1995, *The Zoo Story*, Penguin Books, Ringwood.

16.0 SPORT AND RECREATION

Places related to this theme include:

- Werribee Racecourse, Werribee (HO12)
- Chirnside Park, Werribee (HO104)
- McNaughton Reserve, Little River (HO121)
- Campbell's Cove and Bailey's Beach boat houses, Werribee South

The various sports clubs and recreation spaces across the municipality have been important places for socialising and gathering for residents of Wyndham from the mid-nineteenth century. As different sports grew in popularity, grounds and facilities were developed to host matches, and are reflected in many of the sporting grounds in the municipality today.

16.1 Horse-racing and coursing

From the beginning of settlement, the extensive Werribee plains offered great opportunities for sport and shooting parties made frequent trips to the area. There was prolific birdlife on the lagoons and the Werribee plains were 'abounding in game'.[447] The Chirnside family provided a range of sporting events at Werribee Park for others amongst the landowning class and wealthy Melbourne society. This included coursing (with sighthounds) and regular hunting (with scenthounds). In keeping with the British fashions of an aristocratic landed estate, the Chirnside family ran a herd of Fallow Deer on their estate. These had been bred from the first deer on the Chirnside's land, which included two stag and three hinds imported from Windsor Castle that were a gift of Prince Albert.[448] Deer were so important to the family identity that the animal's imagery is carved into the timber work at Werribee Park. The Chirnsides held regular shooting parties on the property. In the 1990s polo was played in the grounds of Werribee Park — a somewhat exclusive sporting activity that befitted the Old World legacy of the property.

Horse-racing had wide appeal from the beginning of settlement and racing reserves were set aside at Werribee (1861), Truganina (c. 1869) and Little River (c. 1870s).[449] Thomas Chirnside was 'renowned for his racehorses', which he bred at Werribee Park.[450] He won the prestigious Melbourne Cup in 1874 with Haricot. Other local settlers also bred and trained racehorses, including John Robertson of Truganina whose trotting stud included its own racing track.[451] In the 1930s, The Manor was used as a horse-racing stud in the late 1930s by its then owner Phillip Lock.[452]

The Werribee Racing Club erected a new grandstand in the c. 1920s to a design by architect H.J. Flagstaff.

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447 Sutherland 1888, vol. 2, p. 159.

448 James 1985, p. 27.

449 *VGG*, various; *Bacchus Marsh Gazette*, 5 June 1869, p. 2.

450 Peel 1974, p. 130.

451 *Australasian*, 5 September 1903, p. 9.

452 Context 1997.

Figure 107 Hounds in the grounds of Werribee Park, c. 1900s.
Source: Michael Cannon 1985, *The Long Last Summer*, p. 12

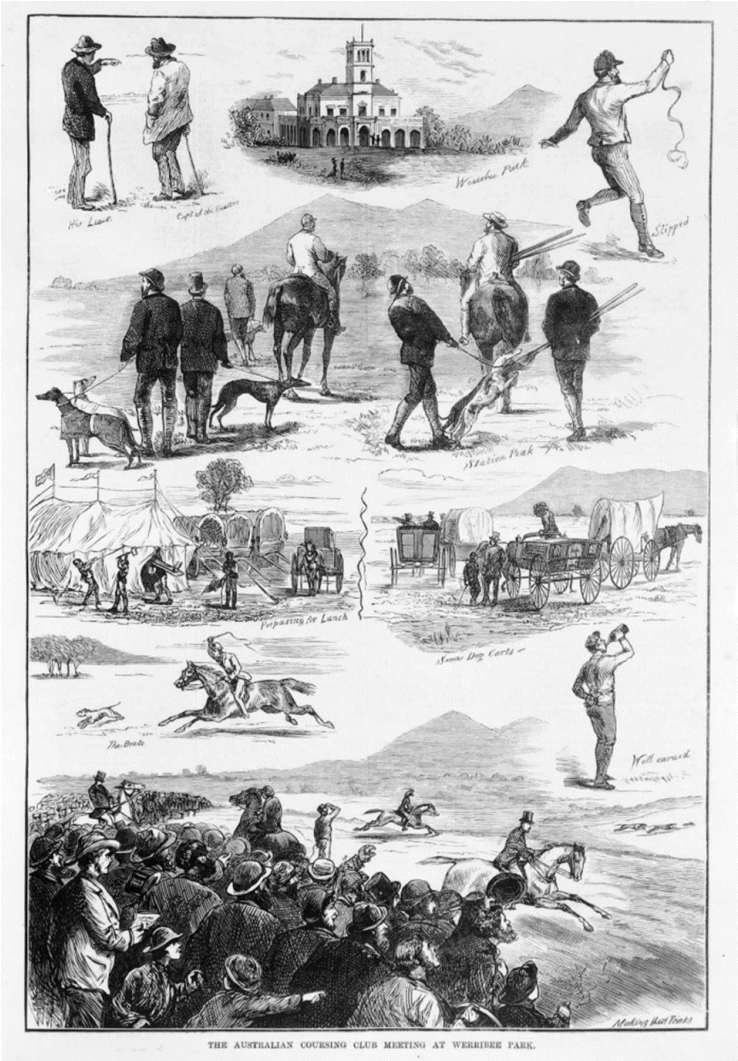

Figure 108 A montage of sketches illustrating 'The Australian Coursing Club Meeting at Werribee Park', published in the *Illustrated Australian News*, 11 June 1877.
Source: State Library Victoria, Accession no: IAN11/06/77/85)

16.2 Reserves and sports grounds

A number of recreation reserves and sports grounds were established in the municipality through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reflecting the interests and recreation activities of the municipality's residents.

A large reserve in Werribee was gazetted in 1861 and was set aside for horse-racing and general recreation, although it does not appear that any formal horse racing events took place until the late 1870s.[453] A Wyndham Racing Club was established in 1878, apparently to prevent the subdivision of the reserve for closer settlement. The site was fenced in 1880, although its condition and use varied over the subsequent decades, becoming a 'town common and swagman's home' in the 1890s, and used for grazing and cultivation in the early 1900s. Following a government threat to revoke the reserve, a new racing club was formed in 1910, and legislation passed for two race meets annually.[454] Improvements were undertaken in the 1930s, including the replacement of earlier weatherboard administrative buildings with a 'rather impressive pile of brick buildings surmounted by a [grand] stand'.[455] Further development of the Werribee racecourse appears to have taken place through the 1970s and 1980s, and racing continues at the site (HO12).

The land adjacent to the Werribee River remained as an unidentified parcel in the early plans of Wyndham (Werribee). In 1870, the undeveloped site was gazetted as a recreation reserve, known initially as Werribee Park.[456] In the mid-1870s, questions arose as to the future of the site, with one correspondent asking, 'what was it granted for, and with is the meaning of recreation reserve?'[457] In this period, the Werribee Park appears to have been used both for cricket matches, and as a 'common stockyard', for travelling stock.[458] The 'beautifully situated' recreation reserve remained in a 'barren condition' in 1878, as discussions around its improvement went through council.[459] The *Bacchus Marsh Express* noted that:

> It is a splendid bit of land, beautifully situated, well fenced, except the river frontage, and yet it is allowed to remain … in a state of nature.[460]

A request was made to the curator of the Melbourne Botanical Gardens, William Guilfoyle, to prepare a design of the recreation reserve, although it appears that only part of this proposal was accepted due to costs and complexity (see Section 11.4). Planting took place through the 1880s. The reserve was renamed Chirnside Park in the early 1900s, and in 1906 the *Bacchus Marsh Express* noted the early improvements of the park undertaken by early councillors, who 'put [in] what is now a handsome belt

453 Victoria Government Gazette, no. 69, 3 May 1861, p. 876; 'Werribee Racecourse', Context, City of Wyndham Heritage Study - Volume 2, 1997, p. 207.

454 'Werribee Racecourse', Context, City of Wyndham Heritage Study - Volume 2, 1997, p. 207.

455 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 28 August 1930, p.7.

456 'Chirnside Park', Context Pty Ltd, *City of Wyndham Heritage Study*, 1997, p. 359.

457 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 26 February 1876, p. 3.

458 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 7 April 1877, p. 3.

459 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 24 August 1878, p. 3.

460 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 24 August 1878, p. 3.

[of trees] all round.'[461] The park was developed with an oval, bowling green and tennis courts, and remains a popular place of recreation for Werribee.

To the east of Werribee, the Soldiers Memorial Park was developed in the interwar period, on land that was donated by George T Chirnside to the Repatriation Department.[462] The reserve was to be placed under joint control of the Wyndham Council and the Returned Soldiers' Association.[463]

From the mid-1920s, Soldiers Memorial Park was used by local cricket and football clubs, including the Duncan's Road Cricket Club, the Werribee United Soccer Club.[464] The reserve was gazetted as a site for public recreation and temporarily reserved from sale in 1929.[465] Improvement works were undertaken in the late 1930s, including to the oval surface, re-fencing the reserve, trees planted along College Road, and the construction of what appears to be a timber pavilion structure. The Werribee Scout Hall was relocated to the Soldiers' Reserve in 1951 and in the c. mid-1960s, a former school building from Cocoroc was transferred to the site for use as a Guides Hall.[466]

A number of small reserves and parks have also been established in Little River. The Little River Recreation Reserve on You Yangs Road appears to have been set aside in the 1850s, with an 1857 plan showing six acres for a 'cricket and recreation ground' adjacent to the Catholic Church site.[467] A public park was reserved to the west of the cricket ground in 1890, now known as McNaughton Reserve, recognising the contribution of members of the McNaughton family to Little River.[468] That same year, sections of land along the east bank of the Little River were reserved from sale, with the present day Rothwell Reserve created as part of this gazettal.[469]

In 1910, long-time local resident, Duncan McIntosh, donated land in the triangular allotment bounded by Flinders and River street and Rothwell Road for a public hall, with the Mechanics Institute hall constructed later that year.[470] More recently, the broader site has been developed as the Possey Newland Reserve, named after Noel 'Possum' Newland, a local resident who had connections with the Little River CFA.[471]

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461 *Bacchus Marsh Express,* 1 September 1906, p .2.

462 *Weekly Times*, 22 May 1920, p. 9.

463 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 8 November 1923, p. 3.

464 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 3 July 1924, p. 6.

465 Victoria Government Gazette, Gazette 19, 20 February 1929, p. 883, http://gazette.slv.vic.gov.au, accessed 19 August 2019.

466 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 13 December 1951, p. 1; Peter Andrew Barrett, 'Werribee Guides Hall', *City of Wyndham Review of Heritage Sites of Local Interest,* 2004, p. 152.

467 'R34 - Plan of the Township and Suburbs of Rothwell on the Little River County Grant', put-away plan, Central Plan Office, Landata, Secure Electronic Registries Victoria.

468 Victoria Government Gazette, Gazette 116, 5 December 1890, p. 4721, and *Pers. Comm*, Les Sanderson, Little River Historical Society to Joy Painter, Wyndham City Council, December 2009, copy provided by Wyndham Council.

469 Victoria Government Gazette, 12 September 1890, p. 3733.

470 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 5 February 1910, p. 2.

471 *Pers. Comm*, Les Sanderson, Little River Historical Society to Joy Painter, Wyndham City Council, December 2009, copy provided by Wyndham Council.

Recreation reserves and parks were established in the smaller settlements within Wyndham during the twentieth century. In the mid-1920s, efforts by the Truganina Progress Association saw the establishment of the Truganina Progress Association Sports Ground, located at the south-east corner of the Woods Road and Dohertys Road intersection. Although the association initially requested the land be purchased by the Werribee Council, its members instead used revenue from previous sports meetings to purchase the land in 1926.[472]

More recently, reserves have been developed along the municipality's waterways, particularly as part of late twentieth century and early twenty-first century residential subdivisions. Riverbend Park on the Werribee River in Tarneit, Skeleton Creek Linear Reserve between Sanctuary Lakes and Truganina, and Butterfly Boulevard on Davis Creek are examples.

The beachfront reserve at Werribee South also provided a public recreation area for residents.

16.3 Football and cricket

Football and cricket have long been two of the most popular sporting codes in Wyndham.

Cricket was played at Little River and Werribee from the 1860s. The *Bacchus Marsh Express* observed in 1869 that with formation of the Little River Cricket Club, 'cricket promises to become … an institution at Little River'. Reports of early matches often noted the unsatisfactory condition of the grounds, including a match between Werribee and Little River at the latter ground which was 'not in a suitable condition for cricket, the grass being several feet high in places'.[473]

Football teams (under the Australian Rules code) were formed in the late nineteenth century at Werribee, and later at Truganina. The Little River Cricket Club was formed in 1869.[474] New teams emerged through the early twentieth century where there were sufficient players and where there was a suitable home ground available for the purpose. The Metropolitan Farm had established football and cricket teams by the late 1890s. A Truganina football team was active from the 1920s.

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472 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 12 July 1934, p. 6.

473 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 24 Novebmer 1900, p. 4.

474 Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. comm., April 2021.

Figure 109 World War II Memorial Gates at the Little River Recreation Reserve. Source: Victorian War Heritage Inventory, via Hermes

16.4 Tennis, bowls, croquet and golf

New fashions for team sports led to the establishment of facilities and clubrooms at the various reserves and sports grounds in the municipality. Bowls and croquet were popular in Victoria from the mid-nineteenth century, but formal clubs were not established in Werribee until the twentieth century.

Chirnside Park was the location of a number of sporting clubs from the early twentieth century. Both the Werribee Croquet Club and Lawn Tennis Club were established in 1905.[475] While early matches of the croquet club were held at the two lawns at Percy Chirnside's property, The Manor, by 1906, the club's matches were held at Chirnside Park), and the club lawns were officially opened in April 1907.[476] The Werribee Bowls Club was formed in 1922, and was allocated use of a site at Chirnside Park.[477] s A pavilion was opened in 1926, with new brick clubrooms opened in 1937.[478] The present clubrooms were constructed in the 1970s, and the club continues to occupy the Chirnside Park site.[479]

The Werribee Lawn Tennis Club was established in 1905, and its members proposed to enclose and develop part of the recreation reserve known as the 'The Nursery' for tennis courts.[480] The club remains based at Chirnside Park. Church-based tennis clubs were also active in the period from the 1920s until the 1960s.

475 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 25 November 1905, p. 3.

476 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 24 November 1906, p. 2 and 6 April 1907, p. 2.

477 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 23 February 1922, p. 3.

478 *Werribee Shire* Banner, 21 October 1926 and 9 December 1937, p. 2..

479 'Our History', Werribee Bowls Club, https://werribeebowlsclub.com/our-history/, accessed 7 June 2023.

480 *Bacchus Marsh Express,*25 November 1905, p. 3.

At Little River, a tennis club was active from as early as the mid-1890s. The Council is reported to have established a lawn tennis court in the reserve by December 1907.[481] An early bowling green was established at the Bowling Green Hotel, a very early hotel in Little River, associated with the township's importance as a stop on the road between Geelong and Melbourne.[482] This hotel was on the site of the Old Little River Hotel, now a bed and breakfast. It is does not appear that bowling continued after the hotel was destroyed by fire and replaced in 1858.

A number of sports clubs were formed for workers and occupants of the Metropolitan Sewage Farm. There were tennis courts at Cocoroc by the mid-1890s.[483] In the 1920s the Metropolitan Farm fielded a football team and had its own bowling and croquet clubs.[484] The community of Werribee South fielded teams for a number of sporting codes from the interwar period, including tennis, although the locality was limited in terms of facilities.

Golf grew in popularity through the twentieth century, with clubs established in both Little River and Werribee. With the more recent development of residential suburbs across the municipality, new golf clubs and facilities have been opened, including at Hoppers Crossing and Sanctuary Lakes. Werribee Park Golf Club was established in 1976 following the acquisition of the Werribee Park estate by the State Government.

16.5 Boating and fishing

The mouth of the Werribee River, which gave access to Port Phillip Bay, was frequented by recreational vessels as well as working vessels. The Werribee South foreshore was reserved for public purposes in 1880, but has traditionally been unsuitable for swimming or bathing due to the amount of seaweed brought onto the beaches.

Yachts, passenger steamers and other vessels used the Werribee Jetty in the 1890s and early 1900s.[485] Fishing was a popular recreational activity on the Werribee River and the Werribee Angling Club, formed in the c. 1890s, enjoyed many pleasant and productive fishing trips. The river was regularly stocked with trout.[486] Eighteen fishermen held licenses for the Werribee Foreshore in the 1930s,[487] and the Campbell's Cove Angler's Club held regular fishing competitions from 1951.[488]

The Bailey's Beach and Campbell's Cove boatsheds have strong associations with migrant groups, particularly Italians, Maltese, Macedonians and Greeks. Some families have multi-generational links

481 *Bacchus Marsh Express*18 April 1896, p.3 and 28 December 1907, p. 4.

482 *Argus*, 21 December 1857, p. 3.

483 Melbourne Water 2020, Cocoroc township, www.melbournewater.com.au.

484 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 21 April 1921, p. 3.

485 'Werribee Jetty' article at Vintage Victoria online; see for example, a canoe trip around the Bay in 1934, Argus, 10 February 1934, p. 6.

486 See, for example, 'Fishing in Werribee River', Werribee Shire Banner, 12 May 1927, p. 4.

487 'Wyndham: A Hinterland of History', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 15 October 1997, provided by Wyndham District Historical Society.

488 'Bill Aims at Registering All Firearms', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 15 March 1951, p. 2.

with the locality.[489] The expanded irrigation scheme in Werribee South attracted predominantly southern European migrants from the 1920s, many of whom established successful market garden industries and associated businesses.[490] The post-World War II period saw a second influx,[491] with high concentrations of Italians and Maltese, particularly from Gozo, an island with a strong fishing tradition.[492] By 1951 there were approximately 30 boatsheds and seven slipways along the Werribee Foreshore Reserve (the area including Campbell's Cove and Bailey's Beach). There were also at least 100 boatshed sites available for an annual fee of £2 and two shillings. It has been estimated that during the mid-1960s and 1970s, 15 percent of the boatsheds along the foreshore were owned by Maltese migrants (Figure 113).[493] Many of the boatsheds continue to be occupied by these migrants or their descendants, and there remains strong community ties to both Bailey's Beach and Campbell's Cove.

Figure 110 Photo titled 'The angling competition for women on the Werribee', 1897, showing a timber fishing hut on the river.
Source: *Weekly Times*, 1897

489 'Boatshed on the Bay', *Real Estate Times*, 3 March 1999, p. 3.

490 *Maria Mantello*, *Now and Then: the Sicilian Farming Community at Werribee Park 1929-49*, 1986; Ken James and Lance Pritchard, *Werribee The First 100 Years*, Werribee District Historical Society Inc. , Revised Second Edition, 2008, pp. 72-76.

491 *Police Life*, December 1958, p. 8.

492 Personal Comms with Joe Agius, a boatshed occupant along Campbells Cove since 1971 to present, 25 January 2023.

493 Personal Comms with Joe Agius, a boatshed occupant along Campbells Cove since 1971 to present, 25 January 2023.

Figure 111 Sketch of a visit to the Werribee River, 4 miles from the sea, by the Werribee Angling Club. (Source: *Arena*, 26 December 1901, p. 6)

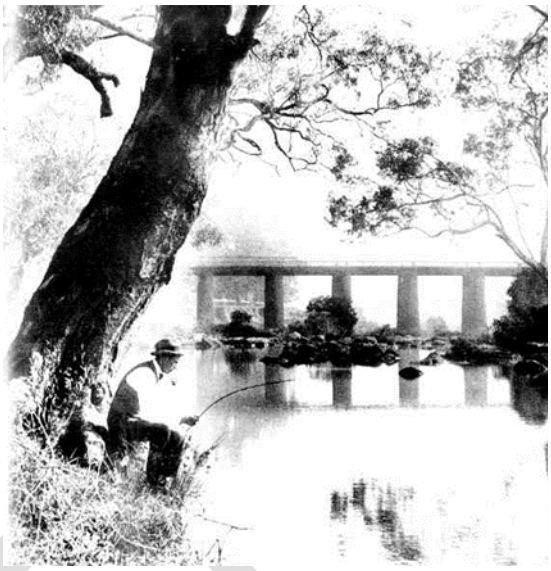

Figure 112 'A picturesque spot at Werribee', fishing on the Werribee River, 1929. (Source: *Weekly Times*, 19 October 1929, p. 39)

Figure 113 View of Campbells Cove, c. 1970s
Source: Copy provided by Joe Agius

16.6 Swimming

The Werribee River and the nearby beaches at Point Cook and Werribee South were popular swimming areas from the late-nineteenth century.

In Werribee, a deep pool known as Bungey's Hole adjacent to the Werribee River was a well-known swimming place. The natural pool had a reputation for being dangerous, with reports of drownings and safety risks after river floods regularly reported in the local newspaper, aiming to discourage any growth in popularity. Although described in the 1920s as 'Werribee's ideal swimming hole', after a drowning in 1934, there was a growing opinion that the site was a 'menace to swimmers' and that a warning sign should be installed on the riverbank.[494]

A concrete swimming pool and pavilion was constructed adjacent to Bungey's Hole in Werribee in 1935.[495] Known as the Pool, this was a popular venue for local swimming competitions. Dressing sheds for men and women were built. A smaller concrete pool for young children, known as the 'Little Pool' was also made.[496] Over time, as the population increased, the Pool became more polluted and unsafe for swimming. A new public swimming pool complex was opened at Chirnside Parkin 1961.[497]

Two swimming pools were established in Little River, which utilised the flow of the river. A concrete pool was opened near the McLeans Road crossing in 1930, at a ceremony attended by the presidents of both the Werribee and Corio shires.[498] The popular community swimming pool was built by Dub Davis, with the water replenished by the river flow. It continued operating after the construction of the McLeans Road weir in 1951, however, has since fallen into disuse.[499] Public swimming baths were built in a channel of the river in 1942.[500]

As part of the development of Cororoc, the township associated with the Metropolitan Farm, a swimming pool was constructed in the early 1940s (Figure 115).[501]

494 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 13 December 1934, p. 2.

495 *Weekly Times*, 2 March 1935, p. 63.

496 'Old pool, Werribee River', Wyndham History, Wyndham City Council http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/371, accessed 31 July 2023.

497 James and Pritchard 2008, p. 69. Context 1997.

498 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 20 February 1930, p. 6.

499 *pers. Comm*, Little River Historical Society and Kristien Van den Bossche, Wyndham City Council, 25 October 2022.

500 May 1989, no page nos; Context 1997; Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. comm., April 2021.

501 Monika Schott, 'A new understanding of abject communities through sewerage ghost towns', PhD thesis, Deakin University, 2019, p. 225.

Figure 114 Bungey's Hole, a popular swimming spot on the Werribee River.
Source: Werribee District Historical Society

Figure 115 Concrete swimming pool at Cocoroc, built c. 1940s.
Source: 'The swimming pool at Cocoroc', Melbourne Water, YouTube

16.7 Cycling and motor sports

The flat plains west of Melbourne provide ideal for the new sport of cycling and the Werribee Road Race was instituted in the 1890s, which ran from Haymarket and followed a course along the Geelong Road to Werribee.[502] The Werribee Cycling Club had formed by the early 1900s, holding regular 10 mile (16 kilometre) races along the main Melbourne Road (Princes Highway).[503] By 1913, the annual sports day on New Years Day was 'becoming more popular each year', attended by a large crowd.[504] Bicycle racing events were also held in Little River in the 1920s as part of the Boxing Day sports day.[505]

Motorcycle races were also held in the municipality in the twentieth century (Figure 116). At the Little River Road Circuit, the Australian Tourist Trophy was the first official motorcycle race to be held in December 1952. The 1954 and 1955 Victorian Tourist Trophy races were held on the same circuit.[506]

502 *Sportsman*, 18 May 1897, p. 3.

503 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 26 October 1911, p. 2, 2 November 1911, p. 3.

504 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 9 January 1913, p. 3.

505 *Werribee Shire Banner,* 8 December 1927

506 Les Sanderson, Little River, pers. comm., April 2021.

Figure 116 Motorcycle races, Werribee, 1917.
Source: Item MM 5582, Museum Victoria

17.0 CULTURAL AND CREATIVE LIFE

Places related to this theme include:

- Little River Mechanics Institute, Little River (HO83)
- Italian Sports Club of Werribee, Werribee
- Former Picture Palais, Werribee (HO94)
- Slovak Social Club, Ludovit Stur, Laverton

17.1 Nurturing and celebrating the arts

Musical and dramatic performances were a part of community life in the City of Wyndham from the beginning of settlement. These events usually took place in public halls and church halls as well as private premises. Various choirs and bands and musical ensembles featured through Werribee's history, including the Werribee Brass Band and the Flying School Orchestra in the 1920s.

Local musical groups and societies were formed, such as the Werribee Philharmonic Society (performing by 1889) and the Werribee Choral Society (by 1926).[507] In 1951, a concert featuring outstanding leading artists and the State Concert Orchestra was performed for an audience of over 900 people at the Palais Theatre.[508]

Local mechanics institute halls in the municipality hosted entertainment events, including concerts and theatre performances. From its establishment in 1883, the Werribee Mechanics Hall was the venue for many performances, such as 'Stolen Kisses' performed by a company from East St Kilda in 1915.[509] Likewise, the Little River Mechanics Institute Hall of 1910 hosted concerts by local residents, as well as visiting groups from Geelong.[510] In the 1900s, events held at the Metropolitan Farm mechanics' institute included dances, concerts and performances by local school children.[511]

Outdoor venues have also proved increasingly popular as concert locations. In the 1920s, the *Werribee Shire Banner* lamented the lack of open-air concerts held at Chirnside Park, as it reported on a rare Sunday afternoon performance in December 1926.[512] In 1951, the Werribee event of the popular Centenary Concert was held at Chirnside Park, featuring an 'outstanding array of artists', including the State Orchestra.[513] Since the 1990s, the grounds of Werribee Park mansion have provided a venue for some leading musical performers and festivals.

The rock band Little River Band emerged in the mid-1970s. The lead singer, Glenn Shorrock, had noticed the Little River exit sign whilst he was driving past the town on an early tour and thought it would make an 'egalitarian' name for a band. The band then filmed a video at the Little River Railway Station in

507 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 22 June 1889, p. 7; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 27 May 1926, p. 5.

508 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 1 March 1951, p. 1.

509 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 21 October 1915, p. 3.

510 See for example, *Geelong* Advertiser, 16 May 1917, p. 5 and 31 October 1917, p. 5, Werribee *Shire Banner*, 12 October 1933, p. 3

511 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 26 September 1903, p. 3, 27 July 1907, p. 2, and 28 March 1908, p. 3.

512 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 16 December 1926, p. 7.

513 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 15 February 1951, p. 2.

1976.[514] Many rock and roll acts, including AC/DC and Daryl Braithwaite, performed in the 1970s and 1980s at the former Tarmac Hotel, Laverton North, now Westside Hotel; this was once one of the biggest beer 'barns' in the western suburbs.[515]

17.2 Celebrating culture

There has been a diversity of cultural expression in the City of Wyndham. In the nineteenth century this was dominated by English, Scottish and Irish immigrants who kept their musical traditions alive in the colony.

In the Werribee district, the Chirnside family, with their proud Scottish heritage, organised or patronised events which often featured Scottish music and Caledonian (Scottish) sports. Such events included the grand fete held at Werribee Park in 1882, where ' purely Caledonian' contests and 'peculiar dances' which were 'almost unknown' outside of Scotland were performed.[516] Caledonian sports and Scottish music, performed by the Ladies Pipe Band, were part of the 'Back to Werribee' celebrations in 1922.[517] In 1938, a Highland Ball was held at the Werribee Mechanics Institute in aid of the Werribee Pipe Band. The hall was bedecked in tartan and participants wore Scottish costume and enjoyed Scottish reels.[518]

Irish migrants also maintained their traditions, notably in Little River. St Patrick's Day was celebrated at Little River with athletic sports in the 1880s. The attendees at the 1882 event were entertained by a fiddler, Mr Maher from Werribee, , '[to] whose music both young and old footed it with mirthful glee during the interval of the events'.[519]

In the twentieth century, as migration patterns diversified in the municipality, social clubs were formed by communities who shared a cultural identity.

The Italian Social Club of Werribee was founded in 1960. Membership grew through the success of bocce competition and in 1971 a site of the club was purchased on the edge of Galvin Park, funded through donations and other fundraising activities. The club premises was designed by local architect M. John Flynn and constructed largely through voluntary labour of the club members. It was officially opened by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Winneke, in 1974. Many additions and alterations to the original building have occurred over time including the addition of the carpark (funded through efforts by the Ladies Auxiliary) in 1977, tennis and squash courts (John Flynn, 1978), extension of the gaming lounge and bistro (1993), front entrance altered from Parklands Grove to Heaths Road (1997) and extensive renovations to the bar and main function room (1998-99).[520] Other groups which support older migrants include the Greek Elderly Citizens Club of Werribee and the Macedonian Community Welfare Association.

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514 *The Indian Sun*, 9 February 2020, https://www.theindiansun.com.au/2020/02/09/45-years-little-river-band-returns-wyndham-free-concert/.

515 Gary Vines, pers. comm., February 2021.

516 *Australasian Sketcher with Pen and Pencil*, 11 February 1882, p. 39.

517 *Ballarat Star*, 31 December 1921, p. 2; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 9 February 1922, p. 2.

518 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 3 November 1938, p. 2.

519 *Bacchus Marsh Express*, 25 March 1882, p. 3.

520 Italian Sports Club of Werribee n.d., 'About Us', https:iscw.com.au/about-us/; Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'M. John Flynn, Dictionary of Unsung Architects, http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_flynn.html

The Slovak Social Club, or 'Ludovit Stur', was established in Melbourne by the Slovakian community in 1966. A large number of Slovakian people had settled in the wider Werribee area in the 1960s. Slovak House, or 'Slovenský Dom', was built as a result of tireless voluntary work by club members, and officially opened in Triholm Avenue, Laverton, in 1981.[521] The building's aesthetic echoed that of Slovak folk architecture, with a traditional barn-like form, broad transverse gable and wooden shingles to the gable ends.

17.3 Popular culture: film, television and radio

The theatre entrepreneur Ernest Rolls sought to adapt Percy Chirnside's property, The Manor, as Victoria's first 'film colony', following its use as a RAAF hospital. Rolls' plans went unrealised, probably due to the lack of investment from locals.[522]

The Werribee Mechanics Hall screened motion picture films in the 1910s and early 1920s.[523] Such was the popularity of cinema in the municipality that in 1928, a new picture theatre was opened in what is now Station Place, Werribee. The theatre was operated by a syndicate, which included local hotelier, D J Canny.[524] Designed by Melbourne architect R M Taylor, the Palais Theatre (Figure 117) was described as 'one of the most complete and up-to-date theatres erected outside the metropolitan area' and a 'splendid acquisition for the district.' It could seat over 1,000 people, with suppers served on the mezzanine level and was fitted with stage, lighting, and dressing rooms for use by theatre productions.[525] In 1939, the screening of the Australian film *Show Business* at the Werribee Palais included appearances by several members of the cast who were well known celebrities in Victoria.[526] The theatre remained a popular venue into the post-war period, but is now used for retail purposes.

Locations across the municipality have been used in film and television productions, Including Werribee Mansion. Numerous locations in Little River were used for many original *Mad Max* scene locations. Wyndham Vale is also known as Mad Max country' with several Mad Max filming locations. The 2016 feature film, *The Dressmaker*, was also filmed in Little River.

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521 SBS (Andrej Bucko) 2016, '50 years of Slovak Social Club "Ludovit Stur" in Melbourne', https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/audio/50-years-of-slovak-social-club-ludovit-stur-in-melbourne.

522 James 1985, p. 114.

523 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 18 November 1915, p. 2 and 14 June 1923, p. 2.

524 'Former Picture Palais, Station Street, Werribee', Wydham History, https://wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/436, accessed 14 June 2023.

525 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 26 April 1928, p. 1.

526 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 22 June 1939, p. 3.

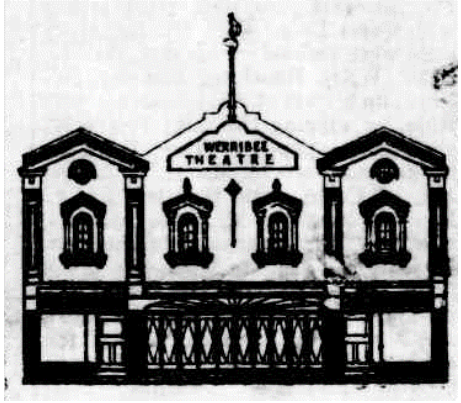

Figure 117 Sketch advertising the opening of the Palais Theatre.
Source: *Werribee Shire Banner,* 26 April 1928, p. 1.

Figure 118 Bike scene during the filming of Mad Max near Little River in c1979.
Source: Little River Historical Society

17.4 Appreciating history and heritage

Through the twentieth century, interest in the history of the local area increased. In 1922, the week-long 'Back to Werribee' celebrations were held, when former residents of Werribee were invited back to the town. The festival presented a range of events, including reunions of former residents and a recognition of local history and the 'pioneers' of the district.[527] Other local pageants have also celebrated the early history of the district. In the interwar period, the *Werribee Shire Banner* published numerous articles and letters from residents pertaining to the history of the district, including recollections of local institutions and identities.[528]

Figure 119 Button badge produced to mark the 'Back to Werribee' celebrations in 1922.
Source: Lost Werribee Facebook Page

527 *Ballarat Star*, 31 December 1921, p. 2.

528 See, for example: *Werribee Shire Banner*, 3 January 1924, p. 6,12 April 1934, p. 1 and 21 November 1935, p. 3.

Much of Werribee's built heritage was lost during the 1950s and 1960s, which was a period of extensive development. The loss of The Manor in the 1960s was a major blow for Werribee, as too was the loss of a number of important historical buildings, whether through demolition or accident, including Quantin Binnah (c. 1888-89), the former Chaffey homestead situated north of Werribee, as well as local buildings such as the town's first post office, demolished in 1966. Local interest in the history and heritage of the area increased in the 1960s, encouraged by the municipality's centenary celebrations in 1963, and this led to the beginning of the Werribee District Historical Society, which was formed the same year.

Since the 1960s, efforts have been made to preserve the heritage buildings of Werribee and the wider district, including the first shire hall, which was erected in Watton Street in 1866-7. The second shire hall, in danger of being demolished, was preserved for community use and provided to the Werribee District Historical Society for their purposes in the c. 1980s. Werribee Park mansion was acquired by the Victorian Government in 1973 and was managed initially by the Board of Works. The loss of a number of early buildings has nevertheless continued in Werribee, with the removal of the Beamish residence (former Wandene private hospital) in 1988 and the early Ison abode farmhouse in 2002.[529]

Little River formed a historical society in 2003 and celebrated the centenary of its mechanics institute in 2010. The smaller settlements of Truganina, Tarneit and Cocoroc have seen extensive change and much has been lost to residential development.

The survival of a number of early tree plantings are reminders of significant developments. For example, the row of Elms on the Werribee River, marking the site of the early river crossing, the Peppercorn trees near the former Chaffey site Quantin Binnah, and the markers of blocks on the short-lived Chaffey irrigation settlement. The creation of the Riverside Historical Park, north of Werribee, marks the site of the abandoned Chaffey irrigation scheme.

The government records for the state were held within the municipality for many years. The Public Records Office of Victoria maintained a repository and search room at 57 Cherry Road, Laverton North, from c. 1975 until 1994. Public records had previously been held at the State Library of Victoria. In wake of the Public Records Act of 1973, a large brick structure was acquired in Laverton which provided a repository for 80 km of public records, a large search room, private meeting rooms, a café and adjoining carpark. Much frequented in the 1980s and 1990s by historians, students, professional researchers, some ground-breaking historical research was undertaken in this building, including research into institutional care and Aboriginal records, which has had implications for many Victorians.

17.5 Monuments and memorials

Many private memorials to individuals have been erected in the public cemeteries within the municipality and on private land. Public figures and notable events have also been honoured on public land. To mark the centenary of the Hume and Hovell expedition in 1924, a memorial cairn was unveiled close to the place near where the explorers crossed the Werribee River. The memorial took the form of a rough stone obelisk assembled from local basalt. The monument at Werribee was unveiled by Sir James Barrett, with Charles Long in attendance. [530] This was one of 33 similar cairns or obelisks that were erected at stopping points along the route taken by Hume and Hovell in 1924-25 and which were designed to be read as markers of this historical journey. The commemoration early explorers — including Hume and Hovell in 1924, Major Mitchell in 1936, and Thomas McMillan in the 1840s — was

529 Werribee District Historical Society website.

530 Monument Australia: https://monumentaustralia.org.au/search/display/33957-hume-and-hovell-expedition.

instigated by the Victorian Historical Memorials Committee of the Historical Society of Victoria, which sought to raise awareness of and to honour those who played a part in opening up Victoria for settlement.[531] Charles Long sought to provide an 'instructive landscape' while Alfred Kenyon declared that the Hume and Hovell memorials 'lay across Victoria "like a scarf of honour"'.[532]

Other local memorials to figures in history include the Matthew Flinders memorial was unveiled at Little River, which was erected in 1952.[533]

In addition to the Avenues of Honour planted in the Werribee area from 1918, there was also an Avenue of Honour planted to honour the work of William Calder, the former chairman of the Country Roads Board. The trees were planted in 1928 on the Geelong Road, on the west side of Werribee.[534]

[*For war memorials, see Section 3.11.4*]

17.6 Tourism

Travelling by road, Werribee was often regarded as simply a stop-over point *en route* a more distant destination, such as Geelong or the Western District. In the era before motor cars, it was a convenient stopping place for the horses. Yet the area also had its own charm, especially the river scenery, and this attracted visitors from Melbourne, including those who were sporting shooters.

Holiday-makers visited the Werribee area from the late-nineteenth century. Increased leisure time opened up opportunities for day trips and the Werribee River area and river mouth were a popular destination for visitors from Melbourne. Howard and Sons ran their steamer SS Derwent from Princes Wharf to Werribee Jetty on weekends at reasonable price of 3 shillings return.[535]

Residents of Melbourne's western suburbs visited the open country of Werribee seeking some relief from industrialised inner Melbourne,[536] but local people also enjoyed trips away. The railway provided the means for day trips, for example children visiting Melbourne attractions such as Melbourne Zoo. The annual Werribee Farmers' Picnic was regularly held at Sorrento from at least 1902 when around 400-500 local farmers boarded the steamer, Ozone, at Werribee jetty for a day trip across the Bay.[537]

The beaches at Point Cook and Werribee South were a popular summer destination for locals. Point Cook had the added attraction of the 'Flying Station, and later the RAAF base, which was open to visitors. Aeroplanes were something of a novelty in the 1920s and 1930s, with many enthusiasts. In the 1940s there was new interest in military aircraft, including the models that were being manufactured in Melbourne.

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531 Tom Griffiths 1996, *Hunters and Collectors: The antiquarian imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, p. 158.

532 Griffiths 1996, p. 159.

533 Monument Australia website.

534 *Werribee Shire Banner*, 27 September 1928, p. 4.

535 Chris McConville 1988, *Mum and Dad Made History*, Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 151.

536 *Sportsman*, 9 January 1900, p. 8.

537 An image of the 1902 event and an explanation is provided by the Wyndham City Libraries website. This event continued into the 1940s.

The establishment of the Metropolitan Sewerage Farm in the 1890s created a new tourist destination for curious passers-by.[538] In more recent years facilities for visitors have been developed, with a visitors' centre established in the early 2000s.

Werribee Park has attracted large numbers of tourists since it was opened to the public in the 1970s. The number of tourists to Werribee Park increased from the late 1980s and a boutique hotel was opened in the 1990s. The National Rose Garden, opened in the 1990s, has also become an important local attraction. The opening of the 'safari-style' Werribee Plains Open Range Zoo in the late 1990s also draws a large number of visitors. The nearby Shadowfax Winery was established in 1998.

Figure 120 Posing with an early bi-plane: the aviation base at Point Cook was an early tourist attraction in the 1930s. Source: State Library of South Australia, Accession Number: B 43968/117

Figure 121 Visiting the hangars at the RAAF air base at Point Cook in the 1930s. Source: State Library of South Australia, Accession Number: B 43968/119

538 May 1989, no page nos.

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REVIEW OF THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The first step in preparing the Thematic Environmental History involved reviewing the existing framework of historical themes, prepared by Context Pty Ltd in 1997 as part of the 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham' study.

DEVELOPING HISTORICAL THEMES FOR WYNDHAM

A comparison between the Heritage Victoria's Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (2011) and the Wyndham historical themes (prepared in 1997) revealed some gaps and inconsistencies (see Table A.1 below). The 1997 sub-themes required streamlining to some extent as there was a degree of repetition and overlap, as well as significant gaps—for example, there is no theme listed that equates to '1. Shaping Victoria's Environment' and '3. Connecting Victorians by transport and communications', while there is the inclusion of 'Ports and Waterways' but nothing that covers road and rail transport.

Table 1 Comparing Heritage Victoria's Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (2011) with the Wyndham historical themes (1997).

Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (2011)	Wyndham Heritage Study Historical Themes (1997)
1 Shaping Victoria's environment	
1.1 Tracing climate and topographical change 1.2 Tracing the emergence of Victoria's plants and animals 1.3 Understanding scientifically diverse environments 1.4 Creation stories and defining country 1.5 Living with natural processes 1.6 Appreciating and protecting Victoria's natural wonders	
2 Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes	**1 Exploring and colonising the western plains**
2.1 Living as Victoria's original inhabitants 2.2 Exploring, surveying and mapping 2.3 Adapting to diverse environments 2.4 Arriving in a new land 2.5 Migrating and making a home 2.6 Maintaining distinctive cultures 2.7 Promoting settlement 2.8 Fighting for identity	1.1 Contact with Aboriginals 1.2 Settling 1.3 Exploring the interior 1.4 Dispossession and conflict 1.5 Impact of gold 1.6 Surveying the land
	2 Appropriating the western plains
	2.1 Pastoralists 2.2 Re-defining the subdivision of the western plains

Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (2011)	Wyndham Heritage Study Historical Themes (1997)
	2.3 The growth of Melbourne 2.4 Government land needs 2.5 Creating smaller rural holdings
	11 Migration in and out of the region
	11.1 The arrival of Europeans 11.2 The gold rush immigrants 11.3 Migrant farmers 11.4 Postwar migration 11.5 Moving to and from other places 11.6 Changing migration policies
3 Connecting Victorians by transport and communications	**12 Ports and Waterways**
3.1 Establishing pathways 3.2 Travelling by water 3.3 Linking Victorians by rail 3.4 Linking Victorians by road in the 20th century 3.5 Travelling by tram 3.6 Linking Victorians by air 3.7 Establishing and maintaining communications	12.1 A landing place 12.2 Developing the port 12.3 Building boats 12.4 Maribyrnong River as a site for industry 12.5 Maribyrnong River as a place for recreation
4 Transforming and managing land and natural resources	**3. Extracting resources from the western plains**
4.1 Living off the land 4.2 Living from the sea 4.3 Grazing and raising livestock 4.4 Farming 4.5 Gold mining 4.6 Exploiting other mineral, forest and water resources 4.7 Transforming the land and waterways	3.1 Quarrying the plains 3.2 Working the stone 3.3 Materials for building 3.4 Extracting mineral wealth 3.5 Re-using the quarries
	13. Modifying the environment
	13.1 Changing the land 13.2 Creating a familiar environment
	4. Initiatives to diversify local production
	4.1 Novel industries 4.2 Boosting production 4.3 New rural activities

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Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (2011)	Wyndham Heritage Study Historical Themes (1997)
	4.4 Using the rich alluvial soils
	4.5 Experimentation and research
5 Building Victoria's industries and workforce	**5 Developing an industrial base**
5.1 Processing raw materials	5.1 Meat processing
5.2 Developing a manufacturing capacity	5.2 Wool and textiles
5.3 Marketing and retailing	5.3 Animal processing
5.4 Exhibiting Victoria's innovation and products	5.4 Building materials
	5.5 Chemicals
5.5 Banking and finance	5.6 Metal industry
5.6 Entertaining and socialising	5.7 Munitions and armaments
5.7 Catering for tourists	5.8 Synthetics
5.8 Working	5.9 Diversification
	6 Changes in the nature of industry
	6.1 Transport
	6.2 A place for industry
	6.3 Developing a workforce
	6.4 Economic depressions
	6.5 Changing processes
	6.6 Women in industry
	6.7 Devitalisation of industry
	6.8 The postwar migrant labour force
	6.9 Industrial relocation
	6.10 Changing corporate structures
	7 Work and employment
	7.1 Women's work
	7.2 Using available labour
	7.3 Juxtaposition of home and work
	7.4 Unions
	7.5 Learning a trade
	7.6 Unemployment
	7.7 Changing nature of work

Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (2011)	Wyndham Heritage Study Historical Themes (1997)
6 Building towns, cities and the Garden State	**8 A place to live**
6.1 Establishing Melbourne Town, Port Phillip District 6.2 Creating Melbourne 6.3 Shaping the suburbs 6.4 Making regional centres 6.5 Living in country towns 6.6 Marking significant phases in development of Victoria's settlements, towns and cities 6.7 Making homes for Victorians 6.8 Living on the fringes	8.1 Setting up townships 8.2 Housing estates 8.3 Creating a home 8.4 Housing to meet people's needs 8.5 Changing residential areas
	15 The West and Melbourne
	15.1 Supporting the metropolis
7 Governing Victorians	**14 Development and change in local government**
7.1 Developing institutions of self-government and democracy 7.2 Struggling for political rights 7.3 Maintaining law and order 7.4 Defending Victoria and Australia 7.5 Protecting Victoria's heritage	14.1 Inception of local government 14.2 Changing participation in government 14.3 Restructuring local government areas 14.4 Changing role in service provision 14.5 Development of regional concepts
8 Building community life	**9 Growth of communities**
8.1 Maintaining spiritual life 8.2 Educating people 8.3 Providing health and welfare services 8.4 Forming community organisations 8.5 Preserving traditions and commemorating 8.6 Marking the phases of life	9.1 Overcoming physical isolation 9.2 Servicing communities 9.3 Establishing community services 9.4 Learning in the community 9.5 Local shops and services 9.6 A sense of community and identity
9 Shaping cultural and creative life	**10 Leisure time**
9.1 Participating in sport and recreation 9.2 Nurturing a vibrant arts scene 9.3 Achieving distinction in the arts 9.4 Creating popular culture 9.5 Advancing knowledge	10.1 Sport and recreation 10.2 Separate leisure for men and women 10.3 Public entertainment

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The historical themes for Wyndham prepared in 1997 provide broad coverage of most of the key areas of importance in terms of the historical development of the municipality, however the framework lacks a tight and logical structure. As it was written prior to the guidelines provided by the document, *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* (2011), the 1997 framework is somewhat loose in terms of how it defines a theme and a sub-theme. The *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* guidelines encourage historical development to be structured thematically rather than chronologically. Although at times the themes may appear to follow a loose chronological order, they should remain thematic aspects of development and not slip into chronological stages.

A number of themes included in the 1997 thematic history warrant more detailed examination, including the development of tourism and the extent of community life and activities. There are also some gaps in the historical themes covered by the 1997 Thematic Environmental History, including aspects of local history that would be considered important to include and acknowledge. For example, there is insufficient discussion of Aboriginal life in the period following first contact with Europeans in the 1790s, and little acknowledgement of Aboriginal–settler contact and conflict from this early period through to the c. 1860s. Further, it does not adequately consider the history of Aboriginal people in Wyndham in more recent times.[539]

Wyndham has an ethnically diverse community, and the Thematic Environmental History should be reflective of the communities who have come to the area both in the distant and near past, and the ways in which these communities have shaped the character of the municipality. An examination of migrant and ethnic history would also require a review of any themes regarding spirituality, worship and education.

Whilst Wyndham has experienced population growth at different periods since early settlement, the area has developed significantly since the existing thematic history was prepared in 1997. Further, with Wyndham being one of the largest municipalities by population in the state, and having one of the fastest growing population rates in Victoria, this population boom will set the tone for the next century of history for the area, and should be reflected at this point in time. Expansion of the themes of transport and infrastructure, particularly in relation to road and rail, and the inclusion of additional themes pertaining to science and research, military and defence, and arts and culture would result in a richer understanding of the municipality.

Augmenting the scope of the thematic history in order to reflect more local historical detail as well as the broader history of the area would provide Council with a valuable document and a useful tool for future heritage planning.

539 Whilst the Aboriginal history of the area should be acknowledged and incorporated into a revised framework of historical themes for the City of Wyndham, a more comprehensive Aboriginal history of the area that incorporates archaeological records and consultation with Traditional Owner organisations would require a separate study.

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