

Phillip Bay about 30 per cent of the entire bay coastline. All the major rivers and creeks that occur around the Bay drain through this area (including the Merri, Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers). Altogether there are at least 940 km of creeks and rivers which merit investigation. Thus the greater Melbourne metropolitan area is a significant part of the Port Phillip Bay region and if its archaeological resources are ignored or overlooked the prehistory of this area of Victoria can never be ascertained with any reliability.

The aims of the project

It is envisaged that the study will take place over a period of two to three years. The first stage will concentrate on developing survey techniques for identifying archaeological sites, establishing a rapport with land managing agencies within the study area, and establishing management requirements. The major aims of the first stage of the project are summarised below:

- develop a practical and economic survey strategy for the urban areas of Melbourne;
- identify areas of potential archaeological importance;
- identify areas where archaeological surveys can be conducted;
- implement a pilot survey program and evaluate its effectiveness;
- based on the results of the pilot study to prepare comprehensive proposals for a survey of archaeological sites in the study area as a whole; and
- liaise and establish a rapport with municipal authorities in the study areas.

Research

All archaeological projects normally have research orientations. A number of such research orientations have been defined, and these will be assessed towards the end of the project. For example, we already know that the shellfish species found within archaeological sites situated in coastal areas vary from site to site; that both the type and frequency of stone tools found within them vary significantly and that some areas of the coast appear to have been more intensively occupied than others. Thus during the project, the Victoria Archaeological Survey hopes to discover what these differences mean in human terms. For example, what resources were exploited at different seasons of the year. When did Aboriginal people first occupy the present coastline. How large were these groups and where did they come from. What environmental changes have taken place and how did the Aboriginal population adapt to these changes or perhaps cause them. Why did the megafauna die out in the Melbourne area, and when. What role did they play in Aboriginal economy.

Management

If archaeological remains are to be conserved and properly managed in the future we must know their location, contents and present state of preservation. The most significant part of this project is to be directed towards finding and recording sites within the study area. Exceptionally rare or well preserved sites will be recommended for permanent protection. Sites which are currently being eroded or damaged will be identified and conserved wherever possible.

It is important to know which factors cause most damage to archaeological sites in order to make recommendations on future land use. For example we will need to evaluate the effects of recreation activities on coastal middens, particularly those selected in public reserves.

To ensure future management of sites identified and recorded during the project, it will be essential to establish proper liaison with planners and developers in the study area. Although it may not be possible to cover the whole area in the time available, the major sites will be identified and it will be possible to define areas where relics are likely to occur. The Victoria Archaeological Survey will then be able to advise relevant agencies where sites are located in areas scheduled for development.

Education

The project will make a lasting contribution to the educational resources of metropolitan Melbourne. Selected sites, particularly those in popular recreational areas, may be recommended to become interpretative centres where the significance of Aboriginal relics can be explained to the public. By increasing the awareness of both local residents and visitors of existing Aboriginal relics within the study area, and of their cultural and scientific value, we hope that other, unprotected sites may be recognised and conserved.

The success of this project will greatly depend on the interest and cooperation of residents, property owners, administrators and developers in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Two or three years is a very short time in which to gather and assess information from an area of this size and local assistance and advice can contribute significantly to the quality and detail of the results.

Archaeological sites not only hold an immense significance for present day Aboriginals, but are part of the cultural heritage of all Australians. We wish to enlist your help to conserve them for future generations.

How can you help?

If you have any information which you think might be relevant to this project, we would be pleased if you would write or ring:

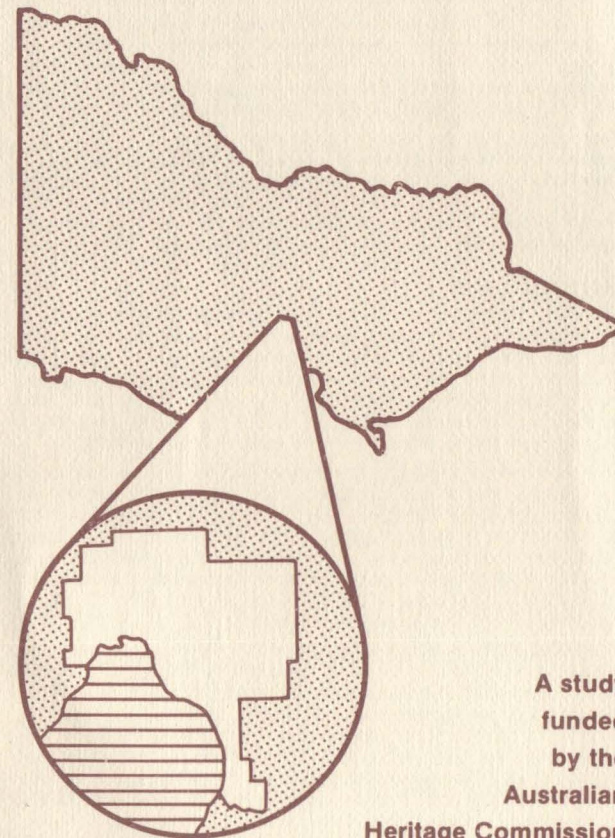
The Secretary,
Victoria Archaeological Survey,
29-31 Victoria Avenue,
Albert Park Victoria 3206
Telephone (03) 690 5322

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March 1982



VICTORIA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SURVEY

THE MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY



A study
funded
by the
Australian
Heritage Commission

Aboriginal occupation of the Melbourne area

When John Batman landed on the shores of Port Phillip Bay in 1835 he was greeted by Aboriginals, and surprisingly, by a white man, William Buckley, who had at that time been living among the Aboriginal people of the Port Phillip district for 32 years.

The Batman landing heralded the beginning of permanent settlement of the Port Phillip district, and the subsequent destruction of the Aboriginal societies that had slowly evolved in Victoria over thousands of years. Today there are no full-blood Victorian Aboriginals, although there are at least 15 000 persons in this State who claim Aboriginal descent, 70 per cent of whom live in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Before the arrival of Batman, the Port Phillip district was occupied by the *Wurundjeri* and the *Bunurong* tribes who were, from all accounts, populous. Members of these tribes ranged between the coast and the mountains, and exploited a wide variety of habitats, many of which are no longer extant. Like all Aboriginals they were hunter and gatherers and moved around their territories collecting whatever foods were seasonally available. However it is likely that they moved to regular locations at particular times of the year. They did not grow crops, and had few material possessions. By contrast their social and ceremonial organisations were very complex, and they had strong traditional ties with the land they occupied.

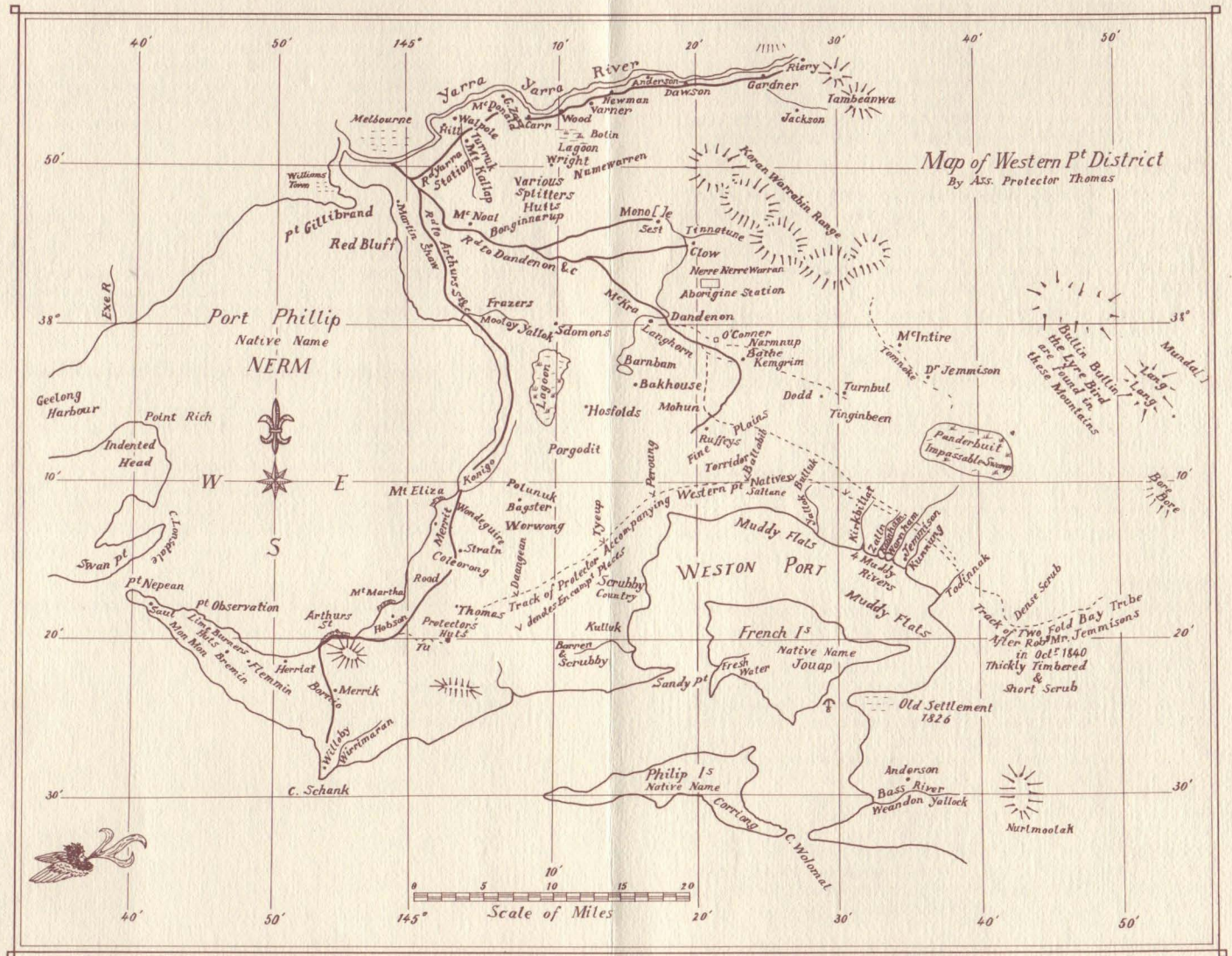
Early maps of the district show the locations of swamps, lakes and river systems which were frequented by Aboriginals. As settlement spread out from the Yarra River, these habitats were slowly annexed, some were drained, others were developed, so that today the inner-Melbourne area is largely a man-made environment.

We suspect that the Aboriginals of the Port Phillip district relied heavily on the exploitation of coastal resources such as fish, shellfish and plant materials. They made a wide range of weapons and utensils from wood, stone, plant fibre and bone, and wore thick cloaks of sewn possum skins which protected them from the cold. Bark canoes were made for fishing and transport. Exotic materials, such as greenstone for axes, were obtained by trade from neighbouring tribes.

In spite of significant changes in the landscape, some evidence of the Aboriginal past remains, particularly in the coastal areas where we can still see shell midden refuse associated with their campsites, and inland, there are occasional scarred trees (trees from which bark has been stripped for a variety of purposes), and scatters of stone artefacts (tools and by products of artefact manufacture from stones) along the major stream systems.

At Keilor where the Victoria Archaeological Survey has been conducting one of Australia's most important excavations, the earliest evidence of Aboriginal man in Victoria has been discovered, as well as the remains of extinct giant megafauna. It has been established that man was in the Melbourne area 40 000 years ago and that Aboriginal occupation probably continued uninterrupted throughout the extremes of the last ice age, around 20 000 years ago, when Port Phillip itself was dry land.

The energetic pace of development and re-development of land in the Melbourne metropolitan area has taken its toll of relics from this lengthy period of human occupation; many of these have been destroyed or are buried under tonnes of concrete and bitumen. Indeed there are very few details of the Aboriginal occupation of the Melbourne area, firstly because no comprehensive archaeological studies have been conducted, and secondly because the demise of the Aboriginal populations also saw the disappearance of the myths and dreamtime legends associated with the origins of man and his subsequent history in this area. Therefore it is only through



the study of archaeological sites (of the material evidence left behind on the landscape by pre-European Aboriginals), that the history of the Melbourne area can be pieced together. In summary, it can be unequivocally claimed that the Aboriginal populations living around the margins of Port Phillip Bay had access to one of the richest environments in Victoria. Although there is little information about these populations during the first years of contact with Europeans, it is clear that the areas supported a high population density and there can be no doubt that this was the case during the prehistoric period. Hence it can be assumed

that there must be considerable archaeological evidence where the greater metropolitan area is now situated but that much of it has been destroyed or obscured by development.

The study area

It is proposed to include all the major municipalities in the survey, excluding those on the Mornington Peninsula, which has already been surveyed. The present area of urban Melbourne (excluding the Mornington Peninsula) is about 2700 km² (about one per cent of the total area of Victoria); it has 65 km of coastline fronting Port

Ministry for Planning and Environment.

Victoria Archaeological Survey



163/84 PJFC/bp

Date February 24, 1984

Our reference

Your reference

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: New Legislation to protect historical archaeological sites

You may not be aware that at the present time there is no satisfactory legislation or administrative mechanisms in this State to protect historic archaeological sites, that is; the remains of our early buildings, factories, mines etc. Moreover over the past 10 years VAS has been accumulating evidence of large scale destruction of archaeological sites through development, use of metal detectors by curio hunters and curio hunters in general. The result is that potentially important sources of information (archaeological relics) are being lost to the nation. You will be aware of the value of archaeology in elucidating aspects of colonial past not readily available in books and documents and I cite the important contribution that the discipline has made to our knowledge of Australian history at Sorrento, Corinella (first Government House in Victoria), Hyde Park Barracks and the first Government House in Sydney.

I urgently request that you bring this matter before your members with a view to soliciting their approval to write to the Minister for Planning requesting that consideration be given to framing legislation to protect this type of site.

The matter is urgent, because the Government has now determined to repeal the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Act (1972) (which has been construed to cover all forms of archaeological sites) so that it applies only to prehistoric (Aboriginal) sites and consequently there will be no mandate or adequate legislation to protect historic archaeological sites. The destruction of our colonial heritage has to be halted and to do this we need the co-operation of your Society.

I enclose a draft letter to the Minister expressing the sort of sentiments that may be appropriate.

Yours faithfully,

P.J.F. Coutts
DIRECTOR

Encl:

February 24, 1984

The Honourable Evan Walker,
Minister for Planning and Environment,
Ministry for Planning and Environment,
500 Collins Street,
Melbourne, Vic. 3000

Dear Mr. Minister,

I write on behalf of our Society to draw your attention to the fact that there is currently no adequate protection or administrative mechanics in place to protect historic archaeological sites in Victoria. Over the past few years we have become aware that these potentially important sources of information about our colonial past are being destroyed at an alarming rate, without documentation and assessment. We believe that this situation has to stop, otherwise we will have no legacy for future generations and large gaps outstanding in our historic past.

We respectfully recommend that consideration be given to framing the necessary legislation as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Honourable Secretary

VICTORIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE MIDDLE YARRA, THE LOWER PLENTY RIVER AND THE CITY OF DONCASTER AND TEMPLESTOWE

CAN YOU HELP?

The Ministry for Planning and Environment is currently preparing the Middle Yarra Concept Plan (Burke Rd to Watson's Creek). The purpose of the plan is to provide a broad framework for the future use, development and management of the river and environs.

An archaeological study is to be conducted on this section of the Yarra that will also take in the City of Doncaster and Templestowe (for that authority) and the Plenty River to Greensborough (for Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works).

The survey and report will take five months to complete.

Commencement: February, 1990;

Field survey: March, 1990 - April, 1990;

Final report: June, 1990.

The aims of the survey are:

- * locate, document and interpret the Aboriginal sites;
- * assess their significance and identify areas of high archaeological sensitivity;
- * formulate recommendations for the protection, management and interpretation of sites within the Concept Plan Frame Work.

Guidelines in the report will be used by the Ministry for Planning and Environment, the City of Doncaster and Templestowe and the MMBW Jurisdiction:

If you have any information which you think might be relevant to this project, please contact:

Isabel Ellender,
Archaeologist,
Victoria Archaeological Survey.

VAS is part of the Ministry for Planning and Environment. The conservation of Aboriginal sites is formally recognised by the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act, 1972* and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act, 1984*. This project is funded by the Ministry for Planning & Environment, Doncaster & Templestowe City Council and the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works.

P.O. Box 262, Albert Park, Vic., 3206. Ph. (03) 690 5322. Fax (03) 696 2947.