

POSTCODES: BLACKBURN



Lush and leafy legacy lives on

Borne out of a garden dream, Blackburn has held close to its heritage, writes **Mary Costello**.

IN THE boom-time 1880s, the Freehold Investment and Banking Company bought land in Blackburn to develop a garden suburb around the newly created lake. It was a dream unrealised, the company went bust in the 1890s. But the Blackburn Model Town Estate was eventually established, featuring a number of mansions designed to "rival Toorak". The legacy of its ambitious planners is attractive streets, parks and fine old houses with many of their interesting architectural features still intact.

Today, Blackburn North,

South and Central form a classic Melbourne eastern suburb — quiet, with excellent facilities, good roads and public transport. There is also ample evidence of the suburb's heritage, with nine National Trust-listed streets and landscaping restrictions. Central Blackburn has an unusually lush tree canopy and plenty of bird life; residents enjoy their own mini-green belt without having to travel to the outer suburbs.

You can find a neat, three-bedroom 1960s house from \$470,000 to \$500,000. If you fancy the stately streets near the lake, or the rustic lanes of the Bellbird area around Laurel Grove and Acacia Avenue, you will generally pay between \$900,000 and \$1.4 million, although some houses fetch up to \$2 million. Townhouses or units range from \$300,000 to \$650,000.

TOP TEN SPOTS

1 Blackburn Lake Sanctuary This delightful bushland sanctuary for native plants and wildlife, birds and people is on Central Road. Enjoy the lake and walking tracks, including the Heritage Walk, picnic areas,

playgrounds, and the visitors' centre with its secluded, brush-walled courtyard. The visitors' centre is open on Sunday afternoons.

2 Blackburn Heritage Trail This fascinating 21-stop journey through the heart and history of Blackburn covers quite a bit of ground, so you may want to drive part of the route. Start at Orchard Grove.

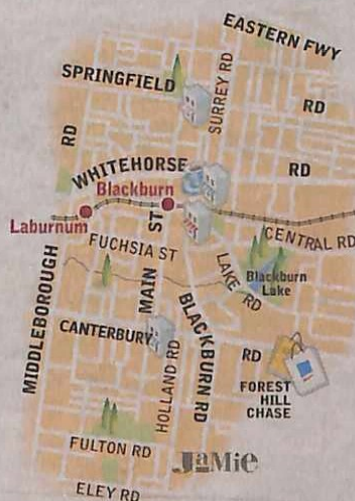
3 Blackburn Village It's called the village for good reason. There's a friendly, intimate atmosphere around the shops, library, laneways and the cafes, which spill over terraces and walkways, or overlook gardens.

4 Wurundjeri Walk A 20-hectare stretch of greenery with wetlands and open space running through Blackburn South on Fulton Road. Formerly an orchard and horse agistment area, the site is being slowly returned to natural bushland.



LEFT: Blackburn Lake Sanctuary hosts stunning native plants and wildlife. Houses in Acacia Avenue (above) fetch between \$900,000 and \$1.4 million.

PICTURES: EDDIE JIM, GARY MEDLICOTT



5 The McCubbin Connection

Artist Frederick McCubbin lived for a time in Wolsely Crescent near the lake. He painted some of his major works, including *Bush Idyll*, in the surrounding bushland. He left Blackburn following an accident in which his baby daughter died when she fell from her pram and hit her head on cobblestones.

6 Gourmet Girl A pleasant spot for a healthy lunch or a sinful snack at 21 Salisbury Avenue. Good food at affordable prices. Caters for special dietary requirements.

7 Bellbird Decor and Cafe

Browse the interesting range of giftware, books, decor pieces, collectors items and movie memorabilia at 20 Blackburn Road. If that's worked up an appetite, walk through to the cafe for lunch.

8 Bonjour de France An enticing French cake shop with good coffee and filled baguettes at 126 South Parade. Gateaux lovers can tuck into a nun-shaped *religieuse*, or a range of smart tartes.

9 The Blackburn Creeklands A linear park with several walking tracks running along the upper reaches of Gardiners Creek, just south of the leafy Bellbird pocket.

10 Elmore Houses In Blackburn's quiet streets you'll still find a number of beautifully crafted early 20th-century houses designed and built by Algernon Elmore, a member of the Fresh Air movement, which promoted living in well-ventilated bungalows in rural or coastal locations.



An appealing arbour off Fuchsia Street.