

8. History and culture in Grampians National Park

Links to Section 1

This resource sheet can be used for SOSE studies to help students investigate the human history of the park. It could be used for park specific application of activities in Section 1 of this Parks Victoria education resource kit, in particular: Parks and SOSE

6. How and when did national parks begin in Victoria?

9. Management issues in national parks.

12. Visitor impacts and management strategies.

Indigenous culture

Carbon dating of charcoal from camp sites in the Grampians show that Indigenous people have lived in this area they called Gariwerd for at least 22,000 years.

Indigenous people continue to have a strong association with the area today.

Aspects of Indigenous people's history and culture are interpreted at Brambuk the National Park and Cultural Centre near Halls Gap. In 1991 a dual naming system using the traditional names of 49 places and features in the region was accepted in recognition of the Indigenous culture of Western Victoria and the importance of traditional names.

Indigenous sites

Other evidence of Indigenous peoples' occupation includes rock art sites, oven mounds, stone quarries and scatters of stone left over from the manufacture of tools, as well as the beliefs handed down from one generation to the next.

The Grampians was so rich in food resources that Indigenous people were able to live very comfortably. Free from the need to spend long hours hunting and gathering, they devoted a great deal of time to cultural activities, of which the rock art sites are the tangible evidence today. Rock art sites are generally found in sheltered areas at the foot of a cliff or large boulder. The overhanging rocks offered shelter, providing excellent camp sites.

Rock art is just one tradition within the rich diversity of Indigenous art which also includes sand painting, body decoration and bark painting. The Indigenous artists of Gariwerd often used a single colour, usually red or white, in a linear style which involved the combination of many strokes. At some sites the artist used a hand to make a print (Gulgurn Manja shelter), or to form the outline of a stencil (Manja Shelter). Manja means hand. Indigenous people use art to teach spiritual principles and convey their beliefs.

Where to see Indigenous art

The Grampians (Gariwerd) contains the densest concentration of Indigenous rock paintings in Victoria and is one of the major rock art sites in south eastern Australia, containing approximately 100 rock art sites. Most of the sites are in the Victoria Range (Billawin Range).

Four prominent art shelters have been developed for visitors and are accessible by car and bus. These are Manja and Billimina in the western Grampians and Ngamadjidji and Gulgurn Manja in the north. Bunjil's Shelter is in the Black Range near Stawell.

Gathering food

This was a land of plenty for the Indigenous people. Waterbirds and fish were abundant in lakes and rivers, along with mussels and eels. There was an abundant supply of birds' eggs, fungi and reptiles. Many plant foods were available including lilies, bracken, orchids and the popular Murnong or Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*). The tubers and bulbs were a reliable supply of food. Seasonally, fruits provided variety to their diet. Reeds grow plentifully in the wetter areas and were sought for making baskets as well as for food.

Kangaroo, wallaby and smaller mammals were hunted not only for food but for other uses too. Possum or kangaroo skins were sewn together with sinews from kangaroo legs and provided warm garments for the colder weather.

The Indigenous people used fire as a tool. Burning promoted fresh growth of grass which attracted grazing animals, making hunting easier. Small localised fires were used to flush out reptiles and small mammals from burrows and hollows. The burns were also timed so that they would promote the growth of plants such as the yam daisy on which the people relied. Over time, the vegetation adapted to fire so that today about eighty per cent of the plants in the Grampians can regenerate after fire.

The arrival of Europeans

The arrival of Major Mitchell in the Grampians area in 1836 led to dramatic changes for the traditional people. European settlers brought sheep and cattle and other introduced animals. They took over the land, grazing their animals and cultivating the soil. This clearing of the bushland reduced the supply of traditional foods. Europeans also brought fatal diseases and moved Indigenous people to missions in areas remote from their tribal lands.

By the 1900s only one small Indigenous group remained. It is estimated that before the arrival of Europeans there were probably between 4,500 and 9,000 Indigenous people in the Grampians area. In just 64 years the population had been reduced to a tiny fraction of its original size.

Brambuk, the National Park and Cultural Centre

Cultural displays located within the Brambuk Centre near Halls Gap have been developed by Indigenous communities of south western Victorian and the Wimmera. The Centre gives visitors to the Grampians an insight into the Indigenous culture of Victoria, past and present.

A variety of educational activities can be arranged for school groups at Brambuk. Bookings are necessary. Information about the activities and costs can be obtained by contacting the Centre's Cultural Officers well ahead of the intended visit.

Contact: Brambuk the National Park and Cultural Centre,
PO Box 43, Halls Gap, 3381.
Phone 5356 4452

European history

The Grampians has had a diverse post settlement history, ranging from the discovery of the area by Major Thomas Mitchell, the establishment of grazing properties, a gold mining boom at the turn of the century, to quarrying, timber production, water resource use, tourism and its establishment as a national park.

About 30 historic European places and features are conserved in the Grampians area, reflecting elements of this part of its history.

European discovery

In July 1836, Major Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, became the first known European to visit the Grampians. He named the ranges after the massive Scottish Grampian Plateau, of which they reminded him (he was from Scotland). Another early visitor was Edward Eyre who was overlanding cattle to Adelaide.

Mitchell's report described the land as full of riches to be harvested and exploited. Mitchell's and Eyre's favourable reports of the Grampians district encouraged squatters to move there in the early 1840s.

Squatters and selectors

In 1841 Lieutenant Robert Briggs took up the first pastoral run in the district and was soon followed by several others. The Selection Acts of the 1860s ended the squatters' exclusive occupation of the land by enabling the selection of small blocks at reasonable rates. As a result wheat farmers soon became established in the district.

Halls Gap was named after Charles Hall, the first known European to set foot there in 1841. The town's early development was based on farming and logging while tourism has been a mainstay since the late 19th century.

Grazing

With the influx of European settlers into the area between 1836 and 1841 sheep and cattle spread over the plains surrounding the Grampians. Fences were not used at that time, so stock grazed in what is today Grampians National Park. Charles Hall, settled at Mokepilly, sometimes grazed his cattle in the fertile creek flats of Fyans Valley. Grazing licences continued in some areas until the declaration of the Grampians National Park in 1984.

Supplying water

Water has always been a much-needed and scarce resource in the district. From the late 1860s the Grampians was seen as a major water source for the Wimmera.

With the discovery of gold in 1853 in the Stawell area and the resulting population explosion there was an increased need for a reliable water supply. John D'Alton, the Borough of Stawell's engineer proposed a supply system from the Grampians to a holding reservoir on Big Hill at Stawell. Work commenced in 1874 and during the following decade, fluming, a tunnel and pipeline were built to carry water from the valley between the Mount William and Serra Ranges to Stawell, more than 30 kilometres away. Between 1875 and 1885 a small settlement at what is now known as Borough Huts campground, serviced the construction of the Stawell water supply scheme as well as local sawmills.

Supplying water to the low rainfall areas in Victoria's west and north-west has become the Grampians' most important economic function. The Wimmera-Mallee Domestic and Stock Water Supply Scheme, the largest of its type in the world, supplies more than 22,000 farm dams and 51 towns from 12 storages. Three of these are enclosed by the Grampians National Park. Lake Wartook on the MacKenzie River was completed in 1887. Further water shortages and crop failures resulted in the extension of the scheme in 1903 with Lake Lonsdale being added. In 1930, the Glenelg River Diversion Channel was constructed to divert Upper Glenelg winter flows into the Wimmera storages. The Moora Moora Reservoir was built in 1933. In 1940 it

was estimated that the water harvesting value of the Grampians was worth 10 times more than if the area was used for grazing.

In 1966 Lake Bellfield was built on Fyans Creek near Halls Gap, and to help fill the reservoir, the headwaters of the south flowing Wannon River were diverted by pipeline into this storage in 1971.

Timber

With the discovery of gold in Stawell during 1853 and the rush that followed there was soon a huge demand for timber for housing, fencing, heating and cooking. Timber was also needed to build the various structures used in mining the goldfields and to stoke the fires for the steam engines.

The early sawmills were set up at the sites where there were the highest concentrations of suitable trees and were mobile, taking the timber they required from an area then moving on to another place. The logs, mostly Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*), were often over 25 metres in length. Bush sawmilling continued until approximately 1940.

From the 1870s permanent sawmills began operating in the Victoria Valley, near Halls Gap and on the fringes of the ranges (located at Fyans Creek, Stony Creek, Borough Huts, Zumstein, Wartook, Cranages and Strachans). Tramways were built and settlements evolved at some of the mills but most were destroyed in the 1939 bushfires.

Grampians State Forest was declared in 1872 and initially reserved 5100 hectares under the Land Act for the preservation and growth of timber. This area was substantially expanded in 1875, 1884 and in 1907.

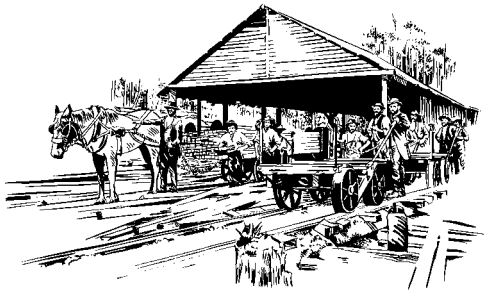
The forests also supplied sleepers, beams and piles, farm timbers, industrial fuel wood and domestic firewood. The best trees were felled and snigged (dragged) to the mill by horse or bullock teams. With successive operations the most desirable trees were felled and the defective and overmature ones were left. This was typical of early logging practices and led to

a gradual degradation of the forest in terms of timber production.

In the war years of 1939-45 large volumes of firewood were shipped to Melbourne and considerable quantities of dry wood were converted to charcoal. The Forests Commission operated a charcoal kiln at Borough Huts.

From early times wattle bark was harvested, mainly from the Victoria Valley. The tannin was extracted from the bark and used in the leather industry.

Timber production was phased out of Grampians National Park (June 1994) but continues in the surrounding State Forest.



Timber Mill BMT

Mining and quarrying

In the aftermath of the 1890s depression the Mount William Goldfield became the site of the last goldrush in Victoria. In June 1900 the Emmett brothers discovered gold near the mountain. Within a few weeks thousands of hopeful prospectors arrived in the area and the town of Mafeking was born. The population peaked at 10,000 later that year but by 1902 people left in droves as the gold ran out. By 1912 most mining ceased. The prospectors either returned to their homes or became tenant farmers in the area. This was possible because some of the large stations in the area were broken into smaller areas for tenant use.

There is no definite record of the amount of gold taken from the Mafeking fields but it is estimated to have yielded gold worth about £100,000. The bulk of it was alluvial. In about 1960 bushfires burnt the last of the miners huts. All that remains today are hidden pits, shafts and heavily eroded creek beds.

In early 1860s Frances Watkins discovered an outcrop of freestone (sandstone) on the slopes on the Mount Difficult Range. He immediately recognised its potential. Grampians sandstone was noted for its excellent quality and durability and it was used as full sized building blocks or as thin slabs to face buildings. He secured a lease for the site and in 1872 commenced quarrying Mount Difficult Quarry (also known as Heatherlie Quarry).

At first the stone was taken to Stawell by bullock dray. This was heavy work as an individual block may have weighed up to 5 tonnes. With the successful use of the stone in the Stawell Court House, Grampians Freestone was selected for use in government building projects in Melbourne. To get the stone to Melbourne the government built a tramline from the quarry to the main railway line at Stawell.

Heatherlie freestone was used in more than 20 distinguished buildings in Melbourne including Parliament House, Melbourne Town Hall and the State Library Hall. During the mid 1880s more than 100 men were employed at the quarry. A booming future was expected for the quarry so a site for the new township of Heatherlie was surveyed early in 1888. Some building lots were sold and the township appeared on early survey maps, but the town never developed because workers preferred to live in more comfortable quarters in Stawell.

Large quantities of stone were taken from the Mount Difficult Quarry on an irregular basis between 1890 and 1930 and the scars left from cutting the stone can be seen on the quarry wall today. It ceased major operation in 1941 because of the Second World War and the large cost of quarrying.

Today, stone from Heatherlie may be used only for repairs and maintenance of historic buildings that were originally made from it. A proposal was made in 1996 to complete the original plans for Parliament House. A bill was passed through parliament to reopen the quarry to supply stone that matched the original material used. However public outcry was considerable and the project did not go ahead.

Introduced animals

With European settlement came introduced pests such as rabbits and foxes. The number of rabbits soon became excessive and farmers attempted to control their numbers using various control measures, some of which also killed small native animals and birds. At the same time the quoll, had a bounty on its scalp because of its fondness for the settlers' poultry.

Red Deer were introduced to the area to provide sport for hunters. When the Grampians was State Forest, part of the area was used for deer hunting for a short open season each winter. Because deer are protected under the Wildlife Act, deer hunting is not permitted in Grampians National Park today.

Tourism

Thomas' Guide for Excursionists from Melbourne was published in 1868, describing the Grampians as a place of grand and eternal beauty. Since then many visitors have journeyed to the Grampians to experience its grandeur. From 1870 Halls Gap became the main centre for weekend trippers to the Grampians from the gold towns of Stawell and Ararat and subsequently from Melbourne. Popular pastimes for these early tourists were walking in the Wonderland Range and Boronia Peaks area and travelling to Mount Difficult Range on the sandstone railway line to Heatherlie Quarry to pick wildflowers. The first facilities for public recreation were provided by the Public Works Department at Halls Gap in the 1890s. By 1914 walking tracks to several features including Sundial Peak and Mount Rosea had been constructed.

When the Forests Commission took over the management of the area in 1918, recreational facilities were confined to the Halls Gap area, Mt Victory and Reeds Lookout. During the 1920s major tourist roads were opened, greatly improving access for visitors to the Grampians. This led to the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria and the Government Tourist Bureau promoting the natural attractions of the area. Further road building programs in the 1950s enabled even wider use of the

Grampians for recreation. Over the years the area has been extensively developed for recreation with roads, walking tracks, lookouts, and many picnic and camping grounds. A boom in recreational use began about 1970 and in the following five years the number of people visiting the Grampians doubled.

The Zumstein site illustrates some of the changes tourism has brought to the area. Walter Zumstein arrived in the Grampians in 1906. He is remembered today for his development of the area that now bears his name as a picnic and holiday spot. He was also an apiarist. In 1910 he applied for his own bee site at Zumstein. He had 20 hives and moved them by wheelbarrow a mile from Mr Barnes' bee sites where he had worked for four years. By 1912 he had expanded his hives to 60 and built a cottage.

Walter Zumstein enlisted for World War 1 and it was not until 1919 that he returned to Zumstein. He began to create a 'beauty spot' from the virgin bush. He cleared the bush by hand and planted about 140 exotic trees, many of which remain today. Over the years he built three pise (mud) cottages, constructed two tennis courts, hand dug a swimming pool and cleared the picnic area. People began visiting the area and renting his cottages and the site developed into a popular holiday destination and campground. Walter Zumstein eventually built a house across the road and, once he moved there, he cleared the paddock between the road and his house and planted grasses which attracted the kangaroos. The feeding of these animals soon became a tourist attraction. Today, now that people better understand kangaroo ecology, kangaroo feeding is no longer permitted.

Because of potential water pollution problems Zumstein was closed as a camping ground in 1992 and developed into a day visitor area.

More detail on the history of the park is available from Grampians National Park Centre:

History of past uses of the Grampians.
Heatherlie - a brief history.

Major events since European settlement

DISCOVERY

1836 Major Mitchell sights, climbs and names the Grampians.

EARLY SQUATTERS

1839-40s Arrival of Hall, Briggs, Carter and Chirnsides.

RESOURCE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

1850s Grampians water was first diverted for irrigation (from Yarrambiack Creek near Horsham).

1860s Many timber mills operated in the Grampians.
Land Acts made Crown Land available for selection.
Rabbits were breeding successfully in Australia.

1870 Rabbits reached plague proportions.

1872 Grampians was set aside as a State Forest.
Francis Watkins, a monumental mason from Stawell, took out a Freestone Lease at Mount Difficult and established Mount Difficult (Heatherlie) Quarry.

1875 Stawell was supplied with water from the Grampians.

1880 Grampians Tramway was built to service Mount Difficult (Heatherlie) Quarry.

1887 MacKenzie River was dammed to form Lake Wartook, the first irrigation storage in Victoria.

1888 Township of Heatherlie surveyed and building lots sold.

1890 First school in the Grampians, at Dairy Creek.

1891 Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria collecting expedition.

1892 Moora Moora settlement built in Victoria Valley.

1895-1902 Series of dry years which increased the demand for water.

1897 Gold discovered at Stony Creek, Halls Gap.

1900 Mafeking gold rush.

1905 State Rivers and Water Supply Commission managed public land in the Grampians was added to Grampians State Forest.

1908 Stony Creek flats, above Halls Gap, dredged for gold.

1912 Walter Zumstein moved to McKenzie Valley and started creating the settlement that later bore his name.

1914 Sanctuary declared over most of the Grampians.

1920's Tourism important in the Grampians; many guesthouses built.

1921 School opened at Stoneyville (Halls Gap).

1923-24 Road links built from Halls Gap to Zumstein and from Halls Gap to Dunkeld.

1925 *One of Nature's Wonderlands - The Victorian Grampians* by J. W. Audas, published.

1930s Depression years; a number of roads built in the Grampians.

1938 Letter to the *Argus* newspaper calling for the Grampians to be declared a National Park. Forests Commission of Victoria developed its 'Multiple Use Policy' for the Grampians.

1939 Much of Victoria, including Grampians, devastated by bushfires. No sawmills sited in the Grampians since then.

1941 Mount Difficult (Heatherlie) Quarry closed.

1984 Grampians National Park declared.

1988 Grampians National Park Visitor Centre opened.

1990 Brambuk Living Culture Centre opened.

1996 Parks Victoria took over the management of all national parks in Victoria, including Grampians National Park.