

## 6. History of Kinglake National Park

### Aims

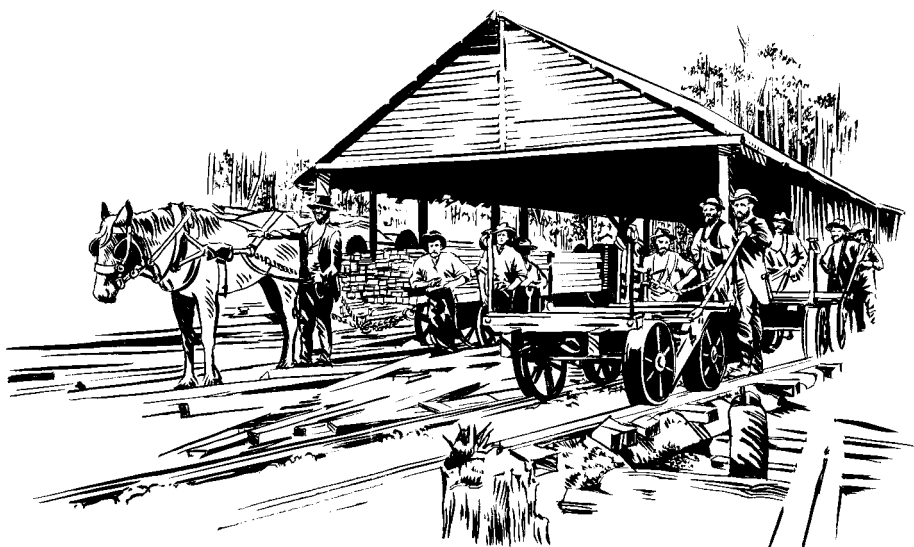
To familiarise students with the human history of the park.

### Materials

Resource sheet 6: Human history of Kinglake National Park area.

### Activities

1. Which tribe of Indigenous people used the Kinglake area, and what were some of the ways they used it?
2. Outline the two main aspects of European history of this area.
3. Briefly describe the beginning and development of Kinglake National Park.
4. Explain how the park got its name.
5. Develop a timeline to show events of significance for the Kinglake area and the development of Kinglake National Park



Timber Mill ©MT

## 6. Human history of Kinglake National Park area

### Indigenous culture

There is ample evidence of Indigenous people in the Plenty Ranges before European settlement. The ranges formed a tribal boundary between the Wurundjeri or Yarra Yarra people in the south and the Taungering people to the north. These two groups are part of the Kulin Nation, so called by ethnographer Alfred Howitt because of their similar languages and their common word for man being "kulin".

Possoms were hunted for their food and their skins were stitched together to make cloaks. Fire sticks were made from the Austral Mulberry, a wet mountain gully plant.

Several registered archaeological sites have been located in Kinglake National Park. These consist of stone "scatters" or fragments discarded during the process of manufacturing stone tools. These fragments are of silcrete - the nearest natural occurrence of this rock is some 25 kms from Kinglake. These sites are protected and must remain undisturbed.

Within 70 years of John Batman's arrival in the 1930's, the culture of the local Wurundjeri people had been almost entirely lost. Indigenous people from many different groups were relegated to a few missions where they were expected to adopt the European Culture and religion. At one such mission, Coranderrk near Healesville, local Indigenous people now run their own cultural co-operative. Wurundjeri people still live in and around the Melbourne area.

### European History

#### Gold Mining

European settlers were first attracted to the Kinglake area when gold was discovered in the foothills, and many camps sprung up around the district. The miners gradually moved up the creeklines in their search for gold and the first discovery on the mountain was made in

1861 at Number One Creek. The township that sprouted there was known as Mountain Rush, just east of the present town of Kinglake.

Evidence of mining can still be found around the park in the form of shafts and diggings, so walking off tracks can be hazardous.

#### Timber Cutting

The Mountain Rush township only lasted a few years as the goldfields were not exceptionally rich, and the settlers' attention soon turned to timber cutting to supply the needs of a developing Melbourne. Timber was carted from the bush mills to the railway at Whittlesea by teams of horses and bullocks. In the early 1900s an extensive network of timber tramways was established, and it was claimed to be longer than the tramlines of Melbourne.

The remains of Carman's Mill and Tramway can be found near Masons Falls picnic area, as can the stumps of huge trees that bear testament to the days of past logging. An interpretive sign along Lyrebird Circuit Walk explains this site.

By the 1920s the accessible timber resources were severely depleted and potatoes replaced timber as the principle product of the region, along with berry fruits which supplied the Leggos preserving factory once located in Kinglake Central township.

Large areas of the Kinglake plateau with its deep, rich soils were cleared for agriculture. Several prominent locals saw this as a threat to the natural values of the local area and proposed the creation of a national park. Among them were William Laver, Professor of Music at Melbourne University; Sir James Barrett, President of the Town Planning and National Parks Association; and William Everard MLA, after whom Mt Everard was named.

### **A growing park**

Kinglake National Park came into being in 1928 when 5,590 hectares was reserved to be managed by a Committee of Management for the Lands Department. This area included 23 hectares donated by Professor Laver at Jehosaphat Gully.

With the creation of the park, Kinglake became a very popular tourist destination with scores of guest houses in the 1930's. Most did not survive the 1939 bushfires, although one, "Morella", still stands as a private residence.

Since its beginning, the park has more than quadrupled in size. Several privately owned blocks adjacent to the Jehosaphat Gully area which were to have formed a residential estate were purchased between 1970 and 2000 by the State Government as part of a "buy back scheme" and included in the park. Similarly, a number of blocks have been donated to the park via the Victorian Conservation Trust as part of deceased estates. Further additions to the park will be made as some land has been bequeathed to the National Park upon the present owners' deaths. In 1977 the Land Conservation Council recommended to Government that a large area of State Forest to the north of Kinglake be included in the park. These recommendations were accepted and implemented in 1980.

The Land Conservation Council in its July 1994 Final Recommendations for the future use of public land in the Melbourne District 2 recommended substantial additions of land to the Kinglake National Park to make a total area of 18,120 ha. These included Yea River Regional Park (200 ha), the Reedy Creek addition south to Buttermans Track (300 ha) and the Wallaby Creek catchment (5600 ha). An additional 3480 hectares of the Wallaby Creek catchment has since been incorporated into the park to bring the total area to 21600ha.

The private property inset (137ha) shown on park maps within the Wombelano block was purchased in 1998 and will be incorporated into the park in 2002.

### **Park management**

The first ranger was appointed in 1928. Shelley Harris, a local veteran of both the Boer and First World Wars, would patrol the park by foot, starting at 5 am. Most days he would walk about 25 miles. His devotion to his "beloved bush" is remembered in the naming of the Shelley Harris Track at Jehosaphat Gully.

The park's Committee of Management was disbanded in 1975 after the National Parks Authority was established to manage Victoria's parks under the National Parks Act (1975). The park is now managed by Parks Victoria.

### **What's in a Name?**

Some visitors to Kinglake National Park are disappointed to find there is no lake at Kinglake!

The name actually comes from Alexander W. Kinglake (1809 -1891), a celebrated English author and lawyer, who wrote of his travels to the Middle East. His first book "Eothen" was a best seller in 1844 and soon after was followed by an eight volume history of the Crimean War. It appears that Kinglake's books were so popular that at the time it seemed a fitting choice to name the area after him. Several other parishes were also named after well known literary figures.

Kinglake never visited Australia, although the parish of Kinglake bore his name as early as 1862. Lindsay Beale, one of the first settlers to the district, suggested in 1873 that the town also be named Kinglake.

Interestingly, Professor Laver's property near Jehosaphat Gully was named "Eothen" after Kinglake's first book.