

# Werribee Park Visitor Guide

Werribee Park is a truly unique property with many stories to share. From Aboriginal communities that are known to have wandered the area, to the arrival of Scottish immigrants making their fortune in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and subsequent use as a seminary by the Catholic Church, Werribee Park offers an authentic insight into three facets of history.

## Early Beginnings

Wurundjeri history along Wirribi Yaluk, known today as Werribee River, dates back over 40,000 years. Acknowledged cultural heritage sites within the riverine area along the boundary of Werribee Park provide an insight into the Kurung Jang Balluk clan and their harmonious relationship with mother earth.

## Chirnside Era

Thomas and Andrew Chirnside, leaders of the Victorian squattocracy, arrived in Australia in 1838 and 1841 respectively. Armed with determination and motivated by their family motto 'Do or Die', the brothers set about creating a vast pastoral empire. Werribee Park Mansion is testament to their successful business venture whilst offering visitors of today an insight into a bygone era.

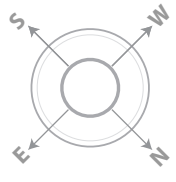
The exquisite 60-room Italianate Mansion is Victoria's largest and most elaborate private residence. Taking three years to build it was completed in 1877 and remained within the Chirnside family until 1922. Initially purchased by Philip Lock, a self-made wealthy grazier from Warrnambool, it was sold again a year later to the Roman Catholic Bishops of Australia for development as a seminary.

## Seminary Years

Werribee Park became home to Corpus Christi College, a training ground for young men seeking to enter the priesthood in the Dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst, Sale and Hobart, for fifty years. The full training course required eight years of full-time study in Arts, Philosophy and Theology. Until 1959 all eight years of study were completed at Werribee Park. As trainee numbers increased a second college was built at Glen Waverley, now the Victoria Police Academy, enabling students to undertake their first four years of Philosophy at Werribee Park and their second four in Theology at Glen Waverley.

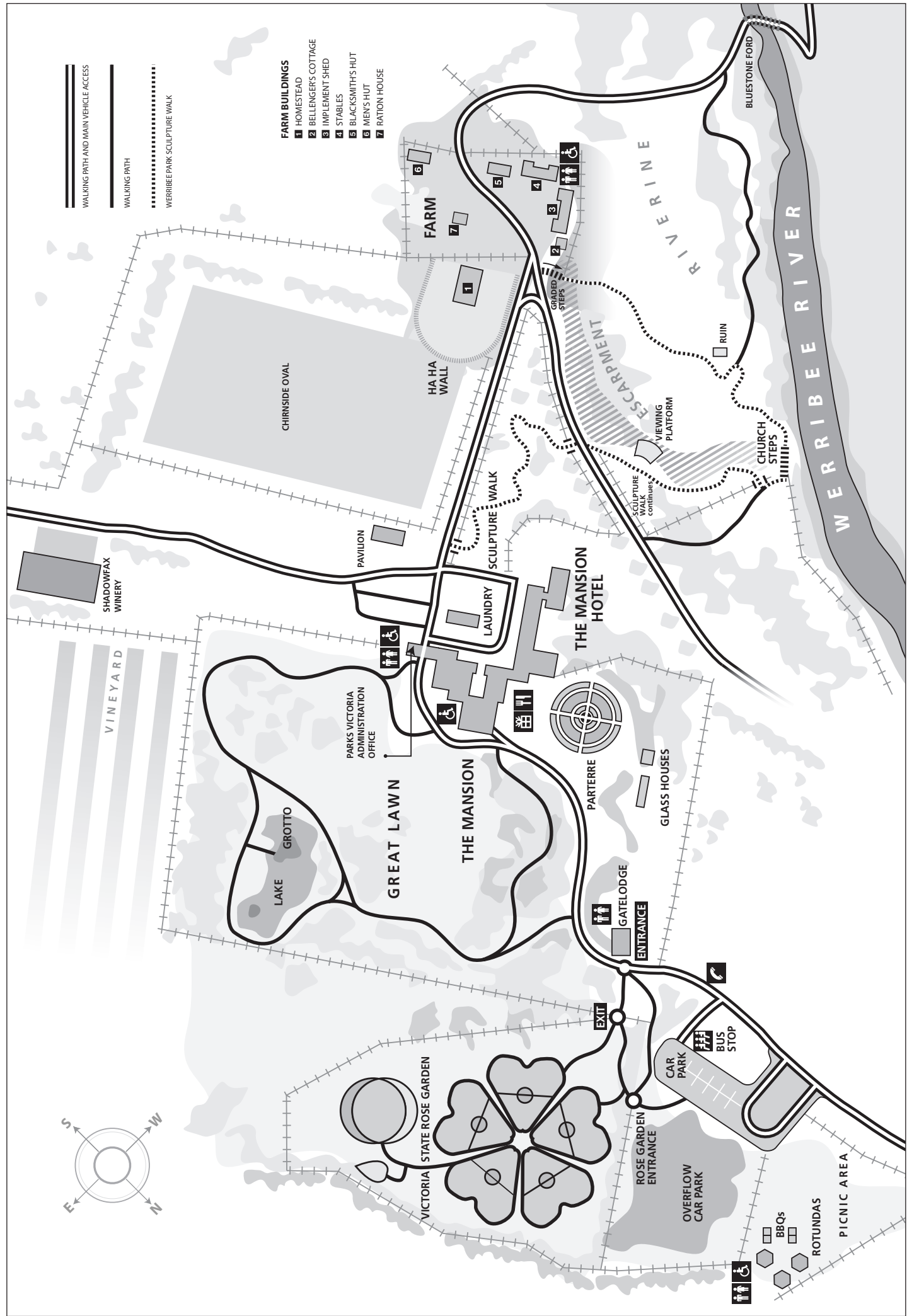
During its occupation of Werribee Park the Catholic Church added several wings, two of which have been converted into The Mansion Hotel.





- WALKING PATH AND MAIN VEHICLE ACCESS
- WALKING PATH
- WERRIBEE PARK SCULPTURE WALK

- FARM BUILDINGS**
- 1 HOMESTEAD
  - 2 BELLENGER'S COTTAGE
  - 3 IMPLEMENT SHED
  - 4 STABLES
  - 5 BLACKSMITH'S HUT
  - 6 MEN'S HUT
  - 7 RATION HOUSE





*Werribee Park*

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Melway Map: 201 D1

**Opening Hours:**

November – April  
10.00am – 5.00pm daily

May – October  
10.00am – 4.00pm weekdays  
10.00am – 5.00pm weekends

Closed Christmas Day.

**Parking & Transport:**

Free car parking is available, or for an alternative transport option the Werribee Park Shuttle service operates daily from the Victorian Arts Centre, telephone (03) 9748 5094 for reservations.



**Werribee Park of Today**

The Victorian Government acquired Werribee Park from the Catholic Church in 1973 and commenced work to progressively restore the Mansion and remaining 400 hectares of land to its former glory. Now proudly managed by Parks Victoria, the park offers a rich array of history, culture and stories to explore.

Step into the Mansion and experience opulence of the 1880s whilst listening to the chatter of the Chirnside family with an audio headset tour. Investigate the seminary years with a dedicated exhibition detailing the Church's use of the property and offering an insight into student life. Meet with May in the laundry, a maid with a wealth of knowledge to share.

Take a stroll to the original farmyard where rustic bluestone outbuildings, once abuzz with workers and activity, provide a stark contrast from the elaborate craftsmanship of the Chirnside Mansion.

Wander through the unique riverine. Parks Victoria is working closely with the Wurundjeri and local communities to ensure the many cultural heritage sites in this area are protected. A revegetation program of native plants is also being undertaken in conjunction with the Wurundjeri to enhance the natural environment and sustain a habitat for a rich variety of bird and animal species residing within.

Journey into the world of contemporary sculpture with the Werribee Park Sculpture Walk. This exciting feature of Werribee Park opened in March 2004 and features an interesting selection of works by Australia's leading sculptors. The walk meanders through untapped areas of the property from the rear of the Laundry through to the natural riverine.

For additional information on the Chirnside family, formal gardens, seminary years, riverine area and sculpture walk collect an additional information leaflet from the Gatelodge or Mansion. If interested in becoming involved in the further development of Werribee Park please contact Parks Victoria for information on partnerships and volunteer programs.

**Werribee Park Tourism Precinct**

Located within the Werribee Park Tourism Precinct just 30 minutes from Melbourne, a diversity of experiences are available. Taste award winning wine at Shadowfax Winery, visit the Café, browse in the Darriwill Farm Gift Shop, enjoy a wildlife safari at Werribee Open Range Zoo, indulge with a stay at The Mansion Hotel and explore various exhibitions and events throughout the year.