

A Cultural and Natural Heritage Overview  
of Garambi Baan (Laughing Waters)  
and Surrounds

## Extract

The following is an extract from a Due Diligence Cultural Heritage Report InPlace commissioned from heritage advisor and Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Annette Xiberras.

*“The Wurundjeri people share a cultural and linguistic affinity with the Bunurong, Taungurung, Dja Dja Wurrung, and Wadawurrung language groups. Collectively these groups are known as the Kulin Nation occupying the south central Victorian region. This cultural grouping share similarities in speech, burial practices, initiation, kinship marriage ties and religious beliefs. The language groups within the Kulin Nation adhered to a patrilineal descent system and the Bunjil/Waa moiety system.*

*Each clan within the Kulin Nation belonged to either one of two moieties: Bunjil (eaglehawk) and Waa (crow). Marriage partners were taken from the opposite moiety and membership in the moiety had religious, economic and social implications and obligations that transcended local allegiances and clans (Barwick 1984; Presland, 2010:31-41).*

*According to Clark (1990), the Woi wurrung (mistakenly suggests that Woi Wurrung was a people however the Wurundjeri are the people he was referring to, and Woi Wurrung is the language of the 5 clans of the Kulin Nation), Bun wurrung (Bunurong), Ngurai-illam wurrung (Taungurung) and Duang wurrung (Dja Dja Wurrung) languages were all dialects of the one language, as they share more than 75 percent common vocabulary with each other. Clark refers to these groups as dialectal-tribes and together as the East Kulin Nation (Clark 1990: 369). Clark included the Wadawurrung as belonging to the Western Kulin Nation (Presland, 2010:12-13).”*

## Land Tenure

The Wurundjeri were divided into five smaller clans and each clan was responsible for a specific section of Wurundjeri territory. The five clans included Wurundjeri Balluk (of two patrilineal i.e. Wurundjeri-Willam and Buluk-Willam), Marin-Balluk, Kurung-Jang-Balluk, Gunung-Willam-Bulluk. At the time of European contact, the Eltham area and the surrounding region lay within the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri-Willam people within the Woi Wurrung language group. The Wurundjeri-Willam people occupied the Yarra and Maribyrnong watersheds, bounded on the north by the Dividing Range from Mount Bawbaw westward to Mount William and Mount Macedon and on the west by the Werribee River (Clark 1990: 379).

Clark (1990) names the Wurundjeri balug (Wurundjeri Balluk) of the Woi Wurrung language group (Presland 1994:37; Clark 1990:385) as the clan whose territory included the current activity area. The Wurundjeri Balluk were divided into two patrilineal groups: the Wurundjeri-Willam and the Buluk-Willam family groups. The Wurundjeri-Willam were in turn divided into a number of smaller groups, perhaps bands. Wurundjeri-Willam occupied the territory along the Birrarung/Yarra and Plenty Rivers (Clark 1990: 385).

The Wurundjeri-Willam were of the Waa, or crow, moiety and as with the other Woi Wurrung clans, followed a patrilineal descent system (Clark 1990: 385). Their clan heads, or Ngurungaeta, at the time of contact from the 1840s, were Bebejan, Simon Wonga, and later William Barak (Clark 1990: 385).

# Resources

Woi Wurrung country is located in the temperate southern zone of Australia and is characterised by cool winters and mild summers. Plentiful rainfall, hospitable landscapes comprising rolling hills and plains, and many watercourses including rivers, creeks and lakes, all provided favourable seasonal landscapes for Aboriginal people during pre-contact times. Ethnographic and archaeological evidence in this part of Victoria supports current cross-cultural understanding that a continuous occupation and successful management of the land was practiced by Wurundjeri people. Significant places in and around the activity area include fish traps, eel traps, and weirs etc...

The mainstays of the Aboriginal diet were plants and roots (Gott 2005). One of the most important foods was called Myrnong (*Microseris lanceolata*), a tuber that resembles a dandelion, also known as Yam Daisy or Native Dandelion. In addition to this plant, there were more than 300 plants of which the roots or tubers were eaten, including the bulrush (*Typha sp.*), marsh club rush, early-nancy, milkmaid, various orchids (i.e. greenhood, onion and potato orchids) and many kinds of lilies (including bulbine, chocolate, flax, fringe, grass, gymea and pale vanilla lily) (Clarke 2011: 72). Roots of common reed (*Phragmites australis*) were also collected to manufacture items of personal adornment (Presland 2010: 71).

Before the arrival of Europeans negatively affected Aboriginal people and changed their way of life, the Eastern Kulin clans were able to move freely around their land within the context of seasonal cycles. Some Woi Wurrung bands spent the warmer months on the banks of the lower Yarra, and moved to higher land in the Dandenong Ranges during the cooler months (Presland, 2010:67). A significant wetland complex called Bolin Bolin Billabong located along the Yarra River in Bulleen was used as ceremonial grounds among other things, and was a place where mature *iuk*/eels (short-finned eel (*Anguilla australis*)) were farmed and traded (Presland 2010: 67-68; Woollard, 2016:27). Eel trap structures, as well as nets made from spiny-headed mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*), spears, and manual herding of the eels were methods employed to capture eels and *duat*/fish (Presland 2010: 67-68; Woollard, 2016:27-29).

Spear fishing from a canoe was also practiced in freshwater bodies, attracting fish with a lighted brand near the water's surface. Two common freshwater fish that were captured include the Australian Grayling (*Prototroctes maraena*) and Tupong (*Pseudaphritis urvillii*) (Presland 2010: 68). More recently in 2004, the *iuk*/eel traps located approximately 50 meters south of Riverbend House were rediscovered after having been hidden amongst sand, sediment and introduced flora including European willows, for almost two centuries (Woollard, 2016:26-34).

Possums, especially the brush-tailed possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) were hunted for their meat and their skins that would later be used to make cloaks. Other animals hunted included kangaroos, bandicoots, emu and other smaller quadrupeds. Protein was prepared, cooked and distributed according to a set of very strict rules (Howitt 2001: 764-765).

# Contact and Post-Contact History

In 1839 the Aboriginal protectorate scheme was introduced in Victoria. Four Assistant Protectors were appointed under a Chief Protector, George Augustus Robinson. The role of the protectorates was to provide food, shelter and medical supplies, record cultural and population information and to indoctrinate Aboriginal peoples into the western European cultural and economic systems. Aboriginal reserves and stations were established across Victoria and Aboriginal peoples were encouraged to move to them. Woi Wurrung clans moved to the reserves and stations set up at Narre Narre Warren, Mordialloc, Warrandyte, and on the Acheron River (Presland 1994: 98-106). A school for Aboriginal children was also set up on Merri Creek (Presland 1994: 100; Presland, 2010:102). The Protectorate was largely unsuccessful and was disbanded in 1849 (Presland 2010:101). Somewhat in a timely manner that coincided with the 'gold rush' of the 1850's in Warrandyte and surrounds, the people that had moved from their traditional lands into the Warrandyte Aboriginal Reserve, which was a 1,908 acre reserve centred on Pound Bend set up in 1852, were forced to move to Coranderrk Mission in Healesville. The final gathering of the Kulin Nation was organised by Simon Wonga and held at the Warrandyte Aboriginal Reserve in March of 1852 (Woiwod, 2015:124-128).

The Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines was founded in 1860 to provide an administrative structure to further control Aboriginal people in accordance with the European ideology of the time in Victoria. Under their direction, a series of missions and government stations were set up throughout Victoria where Aboriginal people could live (First Peoples – State Relations, Fact Sheet – Aboriginal Historical Places). In the 1860s the Coranderrk Mission Station was opened near Healesville. People from the Kulin Nations as well as people from land outside these territories were forcibly moved to live and work on the station almost semi-autonomously up until the 1880s (Presland, 1994:100). Most people of Woi Wurrung descent can trace their ancestry to family who lived at Coranderrk Mission Station.

While many Aboriginal people lived on the Missions and government stations, a significant number of people also worked and lived on farms and pastoral stations. Some Aboriginal people farmed the land on smallholdings, as fishermen (e.g. on the Murray), miners in the goldfields around Victoria, and in the timber industries. People outside the reserves sometimes gathered together in campsites on the outskirts of towns and also participated in sports such as cricket, football and athletics.



*Untitled (Ceremony)*, 1900, William Barak. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria and The Warren Clark Bequest, 2001.



# Geological and Geomorphological Background

The region and residency centre area comprises terraces, fans, and floodplains, with low relief landscapes at low elevation, as well as moderately dissected ridge and valley landscapes. (First Peoples – State Relations, ACHRIS 2021). This geographic region shows environmental characteristics that may have influenced Aboriginal occupation.

## Geology, Geomorphology and Soils

The geology of the Highlands Southern Fall Bioregion includes the Anderson Creek Formation (Sxa) within the activity area and is characterised by Palaeozoic Era (541–252 million years ago [mya]) Silurian (444–419 mya) to Devonian (419–359 mya) predominantly sedimentary and granitic rocks (Maps 5 to 8). These rocks consist of mudstone (claystones to silty claystones interbedded with sandstones/greywackes), siltstone, and conglomerate outcropping (quartz, quartzite, sandstone, chert, clasts of mudstone, and gravels) in Andersons Creek (Vandenberg, 1979:1-2; VRO, 2020). The lower Palaeozoic rocks were folded in roughly a north-south orientation during the mid-Devonian creating ridges and valleys (Sciusco, 1996:4). The oldest rocks are exposed in anticlinoria (anticlines), with the youngest rocks outcropping in wide open synclinoria (synclines). The Templestowe Anticline, Warrandyte Anticline and Bullen Syncline are relevant to the geology of the study area (Vandenberg, 1979:19; Whiting, 1967:19).

The Mesozoic (252–66 mya) erosion cycle had produced an erosional surface of low relief, with a gentle seaward slope, known as the Nillumbik Terrain. Remnants of this erosional surface are represented by the high, concordant, relatively flat hilltops in the Warrandyte and Doncaster areas which are underlain by deep soils. During the late Eocene (66–23 mya) and early Miocene (23–5.3 mya) marine deposits were laid down in low lying areas including in this geographical area. Interestingly, the site of the former Killeavey residence on the property at 130 Laughing Waters Road, Eltham was built on a cliff 40m above surface of the Yarra River and retains evidence of coastal plants (e.g. *Pomaderris elliptica*) that would have existed as far back as 10,000 years ago when the sea level was 30m higher here (Woollard, 2016:75-76).

During the Pliocene (5.3–2.6 mya), the streams draining the higher country to the east and north deposited a thin veneer of terrestrial sediments i.e. Red Bluff Sands on the Nillumbik Terrain. The Nillumbik Terrain was uplifted between the late Pliocene and early Pleistocene (2.6 mya–11,700 years ago [ya]), and streams have since almost completely eroded through the Red Bluff Sands (except in some locations) exposing underlying Silurian rocks (Vandenberg, 1979:26; Neilson, 1967:12-17). Soils within the Highlands – Southern Fall bioregion comprise brown and red porous earths (dermosols) in the upper reaches, and yellow and red texture contrast soils (chromosols and kurosols) in the valleys (VRO, 2020). Holocene (11,700 years ago to the present) deposits comprising fluvial, alluvial (Qa1 and Qa2) and colluvial (Qc1) gravels, sands and silts are also present within the activity area.

The activity area is located within the Eastern Uplands geomorphological unit, which is centred on the Great Divide in eastern Victoria, separating streams draining north to the Murray-Darling Basin from those flowing east into the Bass Strait, and southwards through the Gippsland Lakes. The Yarra River drains the south-western part of the region, flowing into Port Phillip Bay (VRO, 2020). Within this framework, the activity area is characterised by the geomorphological sub-unit, low relief landscapes at low elevation. This sub-unit can be seen in the dissected plateau-like surface of hills known as the Nillumbik Terrain, which extends from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne such as Templestowe, around Mt Dandenong and further eastwards to the NSW border (VRO, 2020).

Alluvial deposits of sandy silts, minor sand and gravel lenses in the Yarra River occupy broad river flats that date from the Pleistocene to recent in age (Vandenberg, 1979:17). Mullum Mullum and Anderson creeks drain in a northerly direction into the Yarra River and their formation is due to the resistant mudstones and sandstones through which they flow and the rapid drop north to the Yarra River (Vandenberg, 1979:26-28).

## Geological and Geomorphological Background (contd.)

The Yarra River emerges from the Warrandyte Gorge into a mature broad alluviated valley at Templestowe and Heidelberg with wide flats on the southern side of the river (Neilson, 1967:13). On the northern side of the river in Eltham, uplifting along the Yarra Fault (oriented north-south along the Yarra River from Warrandyte to Kinglake, has resulted in the Yarra River cutting a narrow gorge on the higher western side of the river (Sciusco, 1996:4). This forms part of the landscape of the activity area, where the river bank is generally steeper and deeper compared to the southern banks and is related directly to the geomorphology of the northern landscapes having a higher elevation and drainage towards the south. Broad river terraces are prominent at Heidelberg and Templestowe, originating as a result of the lava flows of the Newer Volcanics which flowing down valleys caused damming of the river at certain points (Neilson & Jenkin, 1967:50). Bolin Bolin Billabong at Bulleen is the result of this natural damming of the Yarra River and has been recognised as an important place for Wurundjeri people past and present (Presland, 1983:6; Ellender, 1994:26). The Bolin Bolin Billabong was significant during pre-contact times as a place of ceremonial gatherings and *iuk*/eel farming among other things. It is possible that the section of the Yarra River south of, and less than 60 m from the activity area, containing *iuk*/eel traps could have been used as a river crossing to what is now the suburb of Templestowe. Nearby a Wurundjeri ford has been identified that would have allowed river crossing to the Warrandyte side of the river (Woollard, 2016:25).

It is important to consider Aboriginal site prediction models within the activity area as well as in a broader area as being dynamic, complex and intermittent, the type of place as being dependent on the landscape and environmental factors, Aboriginal group boundaries, etc... (Sciusco 1997: 15). These are some of the factors that allowed for seasonal occupation of particular places along the Yarra River not only within Eltham but also on the southern side of the river in areas including Warrandyte, Templestowe, Lower Templestowe, and Bulleen, as these landscapes were and are much flatter and predominantly floodplain landforms whereas the landscape to the north of the Yarra River in the activity area as well as in the wider Eltham area, Lower Plenty, Diamond Creek, Kangaroo Ground, and Heidelberg are significantly higher in elevation, more hilly, wooded areas in comparison and therefore most likely served as resource bases for different purposes compared to the southern side of the Yarra River in this general area (Ellender, 1994:26-27).

## Climate

During the Late and Terminal Pleistocene from 60,000 to 12,000 years ago, climatic conditions in south-eastern Australia were considerably drier and cooler. Although there is uncertainty as to how much cooler the conditions were at the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) approximately 18,000 years ago, a significant variation of 8°C below current temperatures is considered likely for southern Australia (Markgraf et al. 1992; Mills et al. 2013:5, Pickett et al. 2004: 1431). River channels in the Murray-Goulburn system were much larger during the terminal Pleistocene; this is attributed to much greater seasonality of flows related to snow melt during periods of overall drier landscape (Mills et al. 2013:5-6). Sedimentary and microfossil data from lakes in Victoria suggest the period of maximum aridity was after the LGM, from 15,000 to 10,000 before the present (bp) (Mills et al. 2013: 6).

Due to the significant lowering of the sea level at this time, a land bridge extended from southern Victoria across the Bass Strait to Tasmania (Lambeck and Chappell 2001). Several studies indicate that increased aridity also resulted in significant reduction in Australia's forests and expansion of arid steppe or savannah vegetation. Reconstructions of LGM forest loss in temperate Australia suggest that a thin and broken band of temperate forest or woodland persisted along the eastern and south-eastern coast of Australia as some coastal pollen sites indicate forest and others do not (Dodson et al. 1988). Other studies (Thom et al. 1994) suggest woody vegetation was confined to localised favourable microsites such as river valleys. In Tasmania pollen evidence shows that areas now mainly covered by temperate evergreen forest were a semi-arid steppe, rich in chenopods, during the LGM (Markgraf et al. 1992, Pickett et al. 2004: 1430). This sparse xerophytic vegetation would have extended across the land bridge to southern Victoria. Around 6,000 years ago, pollen cores indicate vegetation was similar to that which existed just before European settlement though a moister climate, and hence moisture-demanding vegetation, prevailed (Pickett et al. 2004).

The modern climate of Eltham is characterised by cool summers and wet winters. Temperatures range between an average of 14.6o minimum to 28°C maximum in January and an average minimum of 6°C to a maximum of 14°C in July. Annual average rainfalls of 660.9mm (BOM 2021).

## Vegetation

According to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Ecological Vegetation Classes (Pre-1750 EVCs), the soils of the Highlands – Southern Fall bioregion (Map 9) would have historically supported vegetation classified as Riparian Forest – Riparian Scrubs or Swampy Scrubs and Woodlands (EVC18); Dry Forests – Herb-Rich Foothill Forest (EVC23), Valley Grassy Forest (EVC47), Grassy Dry Forest (EVC22); and Swampy Riparian Complex – Riparian Scrubs or Swampy Scrubs and Woodlands (EVC126) within the property (DELWPb 2021).

Garambi Baan (Laughing Waters) pre-1750, would have consisted of a balanced mix of Ecological Vegetation Classes. Large (up to 30m) eucalypt forest with Stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) and Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) lining the river bank would have dominated. Followed by a medium to tall open forest with trees up to 25 m tall including Narrow-leaf Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata s.l.*), Stringybark (*Eucalyptus obliqua*), and Mountain Grey Gum (*Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*). Beneath these, a low to medium height open forest of eucalypts (up to 20m) of Red Stringybark (*Eucalyptus macrorhyncha*), Bundy (*Eucalyptus goniocalyx s.l.*), Red Box (*Eucalyptus polyanthemos*), Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*), Candlebark (*Eucalyptus rubida*), Narrow-leaf Peppermint (*Eucalyptus radiata s.l.*), and Long-leaf Box (*Eucalyptus goniocalyx s.l.*) would have existed. A sparse secondary tree layer of wattles and understory of drought tolerant scattered dense and sparse patches of shrubs, ferns, grasses and herbs, lilies, sedges depending on the season. The vegetation would have been home to various birds and animals and provided a plentiful resource that would have been utilised by Aboriginal people in the area for food, weapons and vessels, etc...

## Historical Land Use and Existing Conditions in the Garambi Baan/ Laughing Waters Area

Post-contact land use of the area around Eltham is recorded historically as having been predominantly used for agricultural and mining purposes. Market gardens, orchards, tree/wood and wheat harvesting, gold mining, quarrying local stones and running livestock are some of the economic practices undertaken in the area from around the mid 1800's. More recently, from the 1950's, the area has also been the focus of a community of artists with surrounding suburbs including Heidelberg also being a place where artists lived and worked. From the early 1900's through to recent times artists have travelled to and relocated to the wider Eltham area, as well as spending periods of time as artists in residence at the artist communities at Montsalvat, Dunmoochin, Bend of Islands, and the Heidelberg School of Artists (Marshall, 2008:188).

The signing of the treaty in 1835 by John Batman and eight Aboriginal elders including Jaga Jaga a Wurundjeri-Willam elder, outlined that 500,000 acres of land were to be set aside for European settlers in the Port Phillip area. This treaty was not honoured due to the then NSW Governor Sir Richard Bourke following the British Government's policy that the land was 'terra nullius' meaning that the land belonged to no one prior to the British Crown taking possession of it (Goulding, 1988:27; Marshall, 2008:4). The land encompassing the activity area is Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

From that unjust and critical moment in Victorian history, the original inhabitants of the land experienced devastating consequences to their lives and culture and was cemented with the Protectorate System being implemented around 1839. Aboriginal people all over Australia during Post-contact times, suffered disease, massacres, displacement, punishments and conditions so harsh to the extent that their culture was the focus of intended annihilation.

Thomas and Margaret Sweeney were the first freehold settlers in the Eltham area purchasing land from the Crown and naming it Culla Hill in 1842 (Wollard, 2016: 57). Aboriginal people helped the Sweeneys build their house at Culla Hill and were reported as having good relationships with them (Marshall, 2008:4, 18). The Sweeney's planted the first wheat crop and supplied the first grain to the Eltham mill (Marshall, 1971:10). The historical records of the Sweeney's maintaining a good relationship with Aboriginal people may have been due to the fact that Margaret Sweeney established the first meeting place of the Catholic Church at their Culla Hill property in the area, and may have lived with the values of integrity and kindness which were rare in the fight or flight land grab of that moment in Victorian history.

## Historical Land Use and Existing Conditions in the Garambi Baan/ Laughing Waters Area (contd.)

Also during the mid 1800's the pioneering family the Jarrold's built a cottage in Eltham. The Jarrold family were market gardeners and building tradesmen (Marshall, 2008:46). Charles Souter built the first mud brick house in Eltham in the 1850's and later became the standard to which the Eltham style of architecture would be developed. Sir William Irvine the Victorian Premier (1900–1902) and Victoria's Chief Justice, Deputy Governor and Treasurer also lived in Eltham (Marshall, 2008:54). Charles Symons Wingrove JP, a prominent figure in the Municipal Association of Victoria as well as holding various other important roles i.e. the Road Board's first paid secretary also lived in a cottage built between 1858–1888 (Marshall, 2008:56) in Eltham.

Prior to the Sweeney's settling formally in Eltham, the wider area, including the southern banks of the Yarra River, was settled by Europeans who squatted on parcels of land for years, clearing the land of vegetation and warring with the original Woi Wurrung inhabitants of the land pushing them out with often brutal force, prior to acquiring the land by purchasing it from the Crown. Major Charles Newman. These early settlers ran livestock and farmed these fertile lands, and the gold rush fever that grew at a rapid pace during the 1850's saw Europeans flock to the area to maximise economic opportunities around this.

Prior to Eltham being formally recognised as a town, the first hotel was built there in 1852 and was the social gathering place for people travelling to the area (Marshall, 2008:40). The area grew relatively rapidly although few people settled in the area permanently and in 1848 2.6km<sup>2</sup> of Crown land was named Eltham in the Parish of Nillumbik, County of Evelyn (Marshall, 2008:32).

By 1850 Eltham was subdivided into 50 allotments (Marshall, 2008:32). Also during 1850 Josiah Holloway who did not live locally bought land around Eltham, calling it Little Eltham to distinguish it from the Government township of Eltham, which he sold off as cheap farm holdings. The Eltham Primary School began in 1855, and by 1857 Eltham was home to around 1000 residents as well as a transitory population and with the courthouse and police station built in Little Eltham in 1859–1860 in direct response to the gold rush of the 1850's and associated influx of people to the area (Marshall, 2008:32, 64). The Eltham cemetery was established in 1858 (Marshall, 2008:54), and the first church building, St Margaret's Anglican Church was opened in 1861. The first bank was built to house gold from the surrounding mining areas in 1878 (Marshall, 2008:92). By 1902, with the construction of the Eltham railway, the Eltham town centre as it now stands grew around this and was completed by 1955 with the establishment of the current Eltham Post Office site (Marshall, 2008:32). The 1960's saw many artists and honoured Australians live in the Eltham area including architects (Kevin Borland, Alistair Knox, Alan Marshall

(Marshall, 2008:156, 158)), designers (landscape designer Gordon Ford, Ellis Stones, Peter Glass, Edna Walling), cartoonists (Percy Leason (Marshall, 2008:120), painters (Clifton Pugh, Penleigh Boyd – (Marshall, 2008:110, 152), anthropologist (Dr Donald Thomson (Marshall, 2008:126)), sculptors (Matcham Skipper (Marshall, 2008:158, 192)), musicians (Le Gallienne, Graeme Bell (Marshall, 2008:192)), photographers, filmmakers (Tim Burstall (Marshall, 2008:164)), journalist (John Harcourt), authors, engineers, among other intellectual leaders (Professor William Macmahon Ball, Richard Downing, Dr Tim Marshall, and Professor Graeme Clark (Marshall, 2008:192)) relocate to the Eltham area to live and work in a tranquil, inspiring landscape as well as live in a community of like minded artists. The establishment of artists residences in the Eltham area at Montsalvat, and Laughing Waters, as well as the nearby suburb of Heidelberg sprung up during the 1960's and are still thriving to this day. Another honoured Australian who lived in the area was Peter Brock, the motor racing champion (Marshall, 2008:166). A notable place within Eltham is the Eltham Lower Park and Miniature Railway (Marshall, 2008:162), and the rare Eltham Copper Butterfly (Marshall, 2008:180) also calls Eltham home.

The earliest example and prototype of the Eltham style of architecture was Charle's Souter's mud brick house built in the 1850's, with Alistair Knox becoming famous for influencing the Eltham Style of Living in later years (Marshall, 2008). Today, residential living in Eltham is concentrated around the main road (also called Main Road, Eltham) of Eltham with shops, schools, and services all close to and accessible from the main road.

Given the historical land use of Eltham and the surrounding landscape, it is likely that Garambi Baan (Laughing Waters) has been impacted in the past by land clearance to some degree, e.g. European farming activities, some residential development, as well as significant bushfires and floods that have affected the area repeatedly over time. The general area currently comprises residential and large areas of parkland that form a 'Green Wedge' as part of the wider Melbourne plan to protect and preserve parts of the natural environment for future generations. Areas of recreation including parks and walking tracks exist along the Yarra River on both the northern and southern landscapes. Based on aerial photography the activity area appears to be uncleared, with scrub and vegetation across the section of the activity area, there is evidence of the activity area having been landscaped historically and probable disturbance in this area relating to the construction of the existing dwelling, its services and features e.g. driveway and therefore it is likely that disturbance of the ground has taken place in the vicinity of the activity area in the past but the degree and precise location is unknown.

# Historical Cultural Heritage

Despite the absence of catalogued historical cultural significance directly in the activity area (within the residency properties), there are numerous significant places listed in the Victorian Heritage Database linked to the Eltham area (Figure 8) and wider region. Some of the most significant places in the Eltham area relating to the activity area are described below (information supplied by records listed/statement of significance in the Victorian Heritage Database and other relative sources are noted).



Figure 8. Harvey, John Henry photographer & Harvey, John Henry, 1875. Forest Scene, Eltham. Photo State Library of Victoria.

**A Pin Oak Tree at Garambi Baan (Heritage Overlay HO158, Nillumbik Shire),** is located on a slope below the main part of the garden and east of the former house (now demolished). The Pin Oak tree was planted c.1908 by Lady William Irvine at Killeavey (later home of the Morrison family after being rebuilt having been tragically burnt down during the Black Friday bushfires of 1939) who was the wife of the former Premier and Attorney General of Victoria, Sir William Irvine (Woollard, 2016:72). The Pin Oak tree (*Quercus Palustris*) is historically and aesthetically significant to the Shire of Nillumbik and has survived bushfires and remains in good condition and is of considerable height and has broad, spreading branches, and is one of the largest in the State (trunk diameter of around 1.5m).

## Located outside of the property but also along Laughing Waters Road, Eltham

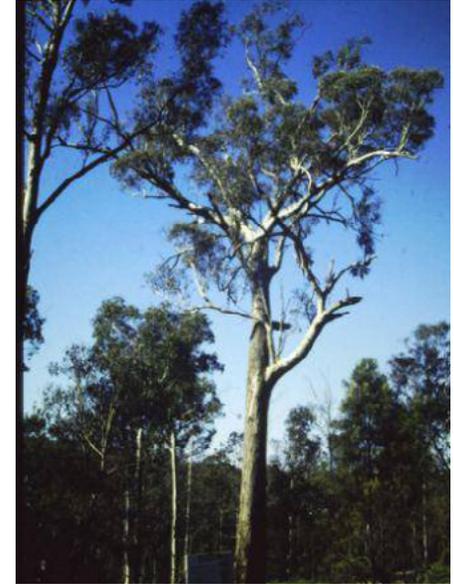
**195 and 200 Laughing Waters Road, Eltham includes the Boomerang Residence, Birrarung Residence, Outbuilding, Landscape Features and Riverside Hut Ruin (Heritage Overlay HO111, Nillumbik Shire)** all of which are historically, aesthetically and socially significant to the Shire of Nillumbik. The Boomerang Residence (now condemned), Birrarung Residence, outbuilding and ruin hold significance as collectively they form the base from which the unique style of architecture, building practices, design and landscaping that defines the 'Eltham Style' became distinct from the 1950's - 1970's. The Eltham Style of architecture is predominantly owner-builder mud brick/adobe wall construction, the use of exposed timber and/or recycled structural elements, and rock and water features forming part of the landscaping. The Birrarung Residence is typical of the Eltham Style with English cottage influences such as exposed beams and steeply pitched, dominant roof forms. The Boomerang Residence exemplifies the Eltham Style of architecture, designed by Alistair Knox with characteristic design elements including a curved floor plan, mud brick walls with exposed timber beams, living spaces located within the northern aspect, and near flat roof.

The 'Eltham Style' of architecture went further than merging mere bricks and mortar to create a house, it also became a lifestyle and way of living. Known as the 'Eltham Style' of architecture, design and living, the owner-builder lifestyle saw renowned architects, designers, and landscapers work together to build homes using resources from the natural environment and utilised their varied skill sets jointly to maximise each properties' aesthetic appeal within its own context, by building houses that merged and blended into the natural bushland environment maximising light, and space.

The architectural design of these buildings includes significant elements such as metal windows crafted by local artist Matcham Skipper, and iconic landscaping including ambitious rock and water features designed by owner of the property Gordon Ford. Sue Ford (*nee* Winslow), Gordon's second wife, was an influential Australian artist of photography, film and multimedia and is associated with the property and especially with Boomerang Residence. Other influential designers and artists linked with the property include builder Graeme Rose, landscape painters Neil Douglas and Jenni Mitchell, and filmmaker David Baker. From the 1990's onwards, the residences became sanctuaries and studios to artists and between 2001 and 2012, became home to the Artist in Residence program run by Parks Victoria and Nillumbik Shire Council.

## Located within the wider Eltham area

**Sweeneys (Heritage Overlay HO32, National Trust, Nillumbik Shire)**, is known as the original site of the homestead named Culla Hill by Irishman Thomas Sweeney, former convict, pioneer and civic leader who was one of the first settlers in the Eltham area. Thomas purchased the property in 1842 and with the help of Wurundjeri people (Marshall, 2008:18; Woollard, 2016:57), built the homestead that has since been demolished and in its place now stands the second house and barn. The Yellow Box tree (*Eucalyptus Melliodora*) (pre 1850), the Pear tree (*Pyrus Communis*) (pre 1890), the Golden Ash trees (*Fraxinus Excelsior* "Aurea") (c. 1930 and c. 1950), the Lemon Scented Gum (*Eucalyptus Citriodora*), the surrounding gardens, and heated glasshouse. Thomas' second wife Margaret established Culla Hill as the site of the first meetings of the Catholic Church in the Eltham area (Marshall, 1971:10; Marshall, 2008:18). Edna Walling and Ellis Stones, both landscape designers, designed the gardens surrounding the house which form part of the farm, orchard, windbreak, grazed paddocks, extended driveway, outbuildings, glasshouse and ornamental garden.



**HO112 – Eucalyptus melliodora (Yellow Box), 35 Laughing Waters Road, road reserve Eltham (Heritage Overlay HO112, Nillumbik Shire, National Trust)**, is one of the few remaining examples of this tree species i.e. Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus Melliodora*) that would have formed part of the normal vegetation in the area prior to European arrival.

# In Place