

Williamson's Dairy Farm

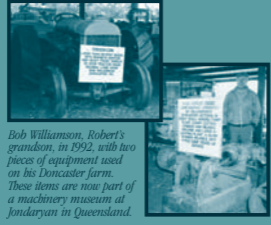
This section of the park bordered by Church Road, King Street, the Boulevard and the row of Monterey Pines used to form part of the Williamson family's 'Springfield' dairy farm. Robert Williamson arrived in Victoria from Scotland in 1854 with his new, young wife Elizabeth. In 1855, he took charge of the Carlton Estate in the Parish of Bulleen and acted as Bailiff of it for 15 years. In 1858, when the estate was subdivided, he bought 250 acres of it, including 100 acres in Middle Road (now Williamsons Road) for £746, where he established 'Springfield' dairy farm and raised his 12 children. In 1863, Robert Williamson was elected a Bulleen Shire Councillor and later became a Justice of the Peace. The Williamson family continued dairying operations until 1969 with a mixed dairy herd of jerseys, guernseys, shorthorns and freisians,



Loading hay onto a horse-drawn lorry in the 1920s, looking out with Church Road at the far side of the distant paddock.

supplying milk to dairies in Doncaster, Box Hill, Mitcham, Balwyn and East Kew and cream to butter factories in East Melbourne and Fitzroy. Hand milking continued until 1939 when a Bolye-Simplex milking machine was introduced. Crops grown on the farm included oats, field peas, millet, maize and hay, which were all used as fodder for the dairy cattle and horses.

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Bob Williamson, Robert's grandson, in 1932, with two pieces of equipment used on his Doncaster farm. These items are now part of a machinery museum at Jondaryan in Queensland. The Williamson dairy farm in 1968, looking south-west towards Shoppingtown from Church Rd north of King St.

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Remnant Woodlands

The area of indigenous vegetation immediately below is one of the last remaining areas of relatively undisturbed natural vegetation to be found in Ruffey Lake Park. The remaining eucalypt woodlands in the Park have characteristics in common with Box Stringybark Woodlands and Yellow Box Grassy Woodlands, once typical of this region. The eucalypt canopy is in reasonable condition but the shrub layer is markedly depleted and the field layer is severely depleted. The remnant riparian (or streamline) vegetation along Ruffey Creek is characteristic of Swamp Gum Woodland dominated by Swamp Gum and Swamp Paperbark, which would have formerly occurred along much of Ruffey Creek. Several areas of the Park are now being managed to encourage the regeneration of the native species and understorey vegetation and it is imperative that these areas remain undisturbed.



Above: View south-west over remnant bushland and Ruffey Creek toward Hummel's Tower, 1910. Right: Hummel's Tower (built in 1879 and 87m high) near Doncaster Primary School, Main Road Doncaster, 2000.

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Species in the Park's Remnant Woodlands

| Trees | Grasses, Lilies, Herbs |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Yellow Box | <i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i> |
| Red Stringybark | <i>Eucalyptus macrorhyncha</i> |
| Mealy Stringybark | <i>Eucalyptus ophiodorcha</i> |
| Narrow Leaf Peppermint | <i>Eucalyptus radiata</i> |
| Long-Leaf Box | <i>Eucalyptus gonioacalyx</i> |
| Swamp Gum | <i>Eucalyptus ovata</i> |
| Black Wattle | <i>Acacia moorei</i> |
| Blackwood | <i>Acacia melanoxylon</i> |
| Lightwood | <i>Acacia implexa</i> |
| Cherry Ballart | <i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i> |
| Shrubs | Ferns |
| Sweet Bursaria | <i>Bursaria spinosa</i> |
| Hedge Wattle | <i>Acacia paniculata</i> |
| Tree Violet | <i>Hymenanthera dentata</i> |
| Austral Bracken | <i>Pteridium esculentum</i> |
| Woolly Grass | <i>Microcladia stipoides</i> |
| Woolly Grass | <i>Themeda triandra</i> |
| Pale Flax-lily | <i>Dianella longifolia</i> |
| Wattle Mat-lily | <i>Lomandra filiformis</i> |
| Variable Sward-sedge | <i>Lepidosperma laterale</i> |
| Bidgee-Widgee | <i>Acacia noosa-zelandiae</i> |

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Wurundjeri Willam

Before European settlement, the land that is now Ruffey Lake Park belonged to the Wurundjeri willam clan of Aboriginal people, who occupied the land south of the Yarra River, from Gardiners Creek to the north of the Dandenongs. Wurundjeri willam translates as 'white gum tree dwellers' - the white gum being the Manna gum (*Eucalyptus riminalis*). The Wurundjeri willam spoke *Woiwurrung*, a dialect of the Eastern Kulin language. The Yarra River and its tributaries, including Ruffey Creek, were the life-source of the Wurundjeri, who moved across the river flats and along the creeks according to the seasons and the availability of food. In a typical day, women and children would fish using spears, traps, nets and made from bark, rushes and reeds. They also gathered and prepared grubs, insects,



Aboriginal campsite in the Yarra region, taken by Fauchery & Daintree between 1857 and 1859. Campsite layouts followed a strict pattern and each section had its own fire. Note the scarred trees where bark has been removed for making a canoe, shield or misa-misa (shelter), the possum skin rug, wooden spears (left front), and the dingoes - an integral part of Aboriginal life. The men's blankets and man's hat are evidence of European contact. Baskets made by Wurundjeri women using bark fibres and reed leaves.

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birds' eggs and plant foods - such as the bulb-like roots of the Murnong (yam daisy), the Cherry Ballart, Prickly Currant Bush and Austral Bracken - and made string, digging sticks and stone tools. Meanwhile, the men would hunt for kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, bandicoots, koalas, rats and snakes using wooden spears with bone tips, and trap emus, wild turkeys, waterfowl and birds with nets and snares. In 1853, the last of the Wurundjeri clan were moved to a reserve at Pound Bend near Warrandyte, then a few years later to the Coranderk Reserve in Healesville and to the Lake Tyers Reserve in East Gippsland. Today, the Aboriginal heritage of this region is under the custodianship of the Coranderk Koori Co-operative of Healesville, among whom are descendants of the Wurundjeri willam clan.

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Old Mudstone Quarries

Ruffey Lake Park sits on thick beds of Silurian-aged mudstone with minor beds of finer sandstone and occasional conglomerite, which were laid down deep under the ocean some 420 million years ago. Over time, these beds have buckled and fractured to form the current rolling landscape, known as the Nillumbik Terrain. These rocks can be seen exposed in several small quarries in the Park. During the 1850s, the mudstone from this quarry was used to build several local houses, including part of Gottlieb Thiele's house, Friedensruh. In the 1860s and 70s, the rock was also used for road-making but was found to be too soft and the quarry was abandoned. In 1930, the eastern quarry was re-opened to provide stone for rebuilding the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church of England on the corner of Doncaster and Church Roads in Doncaster.



Thiele family picnic at the western quarry in 1905.

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Finger's Bunya Pines

The two trees seen directly ahead are Bunya Pines (*Araucaria biduwillii*). They were planted by early German settler John Finger in about 1900, on each side of a gate connecting his orchard to the cart track on which you are standing, which led up to Victoria Street (then known as Bismarck Street). The tree on the left is shorter than the other due to a fire shortly after the trees were planted. The Bunya Pine is endemic mainly to south-east Queensland, where it grows to a height of 43 metres. Its pale timber is very easily worked and is ideal for furniture making as it can be sawn into wide pieces.



Finger's Bunya Pines looking northeast over Ruffey Creek, c. 1915.

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The Aborigines of Queensland highly valued the tree and called it *Bon-yi Bon-yi*. They regarded its large, sweet and very nutritious seeds (extracted from the cones) as a delicacy and ate them raw when young and fresh, or roasted ripe seeds in ashes or hot coals. Every third year, Bunya pines have a bumper seed crop and the Aborigines would travel long distances to gather for seed feasts.



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Old Cart Track

This charming old cart track between two rows of Monterey Pines was made by the Thiele family in the 1850s in order to haul loads of stone from the western quarry when building Friedensruh in 1853. They also used the track for carting timber, fruit and vegetables. A right-of-way over this track was later purchased for £100 in 1890 by orchardist John Finger, to enable him to cart the fertile soil from the alluvial flats beside Ruffey Creek to his orchard on the eastern side of Victoria Street, on the present site of Reischicks Reserve. John Finger was one of the district's most successful lemon growers. His house *Heimat* was built in the midst of his orchard in 1890. This late Victorian, solid brick house can still be seen today between the athletics track and playing fields. Finger also built a large dam on Ruffey Creek to provide water for his orchard.



Dray used for carting stone. View to the north-east over John Finger's orchard from the bell of the Lutheran Church in Victoria Street, circa 1900. John Finger's house *Heimat* is in the centre. George Street runs across the front centre.

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Schramm's Cottage Complex

The Schramm's Cottage Museum Complex comprises the fully furnished Schramm's Cottage (1875) and its old world garden, the Pioneer Orchard Museum housed in Henry Finger's Barn (1870), Atkin's Orchard Cottage (1870s), the Box Hill-Doncaster Tram Replica and the Waldau Lutheran Cemetery. Schramm's Cottage Built for Pastor Max von Schramm and his wife Kate in 1875 in Doncaster Road beside the present site of the municipal offices, Schramm's Cottage was rebuilt at its current site in 1975. The cottage provides a picture of life in the pioneering days of the late 1800s. Pioneer Orchard Museum Henry Finger's 1870s Barn houses a fascinating collection of implements and machinery used on local orchards, with photographs and displays showing the history of local pioneer orchardists.



Waldau Lutheran Cemetery The cemetery is all that remains of the first wattle-and-daub Lutheran Church built on the site in 1858. The cemetery was officially in use between 1854 and 1888, when it was closed due to increasing seepage from graves into nearby Ruffey Creek. Altogether, 80 children and 45 adults were buried in the Waldau Cemetery.

Box Hill-Doncaster Electric Tram A full size replica of Australia's first electric tram, which ran through orchards and paddocks between Box Hill and Doncaster, from 1889 to 1896, when it was closed due to lack of use during the Depression. Tram Road was later built along the tram route. Muriel Green Drive, 70m sth off Victoria St. Open Sundays and Public Holidays 2-5pm.

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Victoria (Bismarck) Street

The road we know today as Victoria Street has been known by various names over its relatively short lifetime. The dirt tracks in this vicinity - called Waldau or 'a clearing in the forest' by its mostly German-speaking settlers - were initially given German names. Victoria Street was named Bismarck Street, while on early maps it was shown as Government Road. George Street was Waldau Lane to the German settlers and German Lane to the English settlers. King Street was known as Wilhelm Street. In 1916, during World War I, all German-sounding names were changed following a petition to Council led by German Lutheran descendant Mr Fred Zerbe, who wanted to prove his allegiance to the British Crown. The names of pioneer families are reflected in the names of many local streets and reserves - Thiele, Aumann, Zerbe, Fromhold, Dehnert, Zander, Rieschicks, Hanke, Crouch, Serpell, Tully.



1895 view from the roof of the Trinity Lutheran Church looking north along Bismarck Street (Victoria Street). The Lutheran Cemetery and old Waldau Church site (now the site of Schramm's Cottage) is in the centre. Ruffey Lake Park land is on the left of the road. 1905 view north along Bismarck (Victoria) Street from Trinity Lutheran Church. 1905 view south along Bismarck (Victoria) Street, with Trinity Lutheran Church. 1920 view south along Victoria Street from the Waldau Cemetery.

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RUFFEY LAKE PARK HERITAGE TRAIL



A fascinating walking trail of 20 sites of local historic interest:

- 1 The Old Pear Tree
- 2 Waldau Village
- 3 Friedensruh
- 4 The Thiele Orchard
- 5 Gordon Crouch House
- 6 Ruffey Creek
- 7 Old Bullock Track Ford
- 8 Woodcutters & Coke Burners
- 9 Monterey Pine Windbreaks
- 10 Magic Mountain
- 11 The Tully Orchard
- 12 The Crouch Orchard
- 13 Williamson's Dairy Farm
- 14 Remnant Woodlands
- 15 Wurundjeri Willam
- 16 Old Mudstone Quarries
- 17 Finger's Bunya Pines
- 18 Old Cart Track
- 19 Schramm's Cottage & Museum
- 20 Victoria (Bismarck) Street



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