

City of Melville Whadjuk Boodja Aboriginal Land

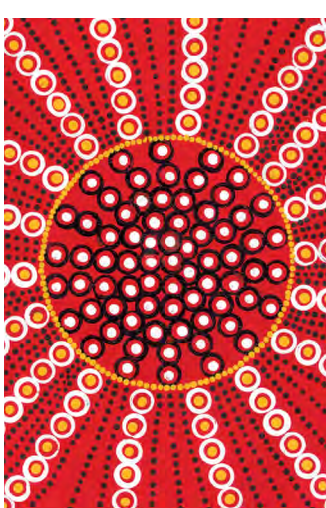
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Introduction

The Aboriginal Bidi (paths) have become today's highways and roads. When the south west was first explored by the Europeans, they commented on the existence of well cleared paths and tracks between major campsites and places where favourite food and other resources could be collected. Early colonial roads frequently followed the line of Noongar tracks as many of these tracks passed water resources.

Since the "Bringing together Willagee" project began in January 1997, the City of Melville Community Development Officer (Aboriginal Engagement) has been researching significant indigenous sites within the City limits. The research has been highly successful in discovering sites and meeting the local Elders who have shared their history for all to learn.



The City of Melville sits within the cultural region of Beelair. The district was bounded by Melville Waters and the Canning River on the north through to Katamordo (Darling Ranges) on the east, the moomboyet (sea) to the west and by the line due east from Mangles Bay on the south.

For more information on Aboriginal History please visit melvillecity.com.au/aboriginalhistory.

REFERENCES

For further readings and a full list of references visit www.melvillecity.com.au/aboriginalhistory

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

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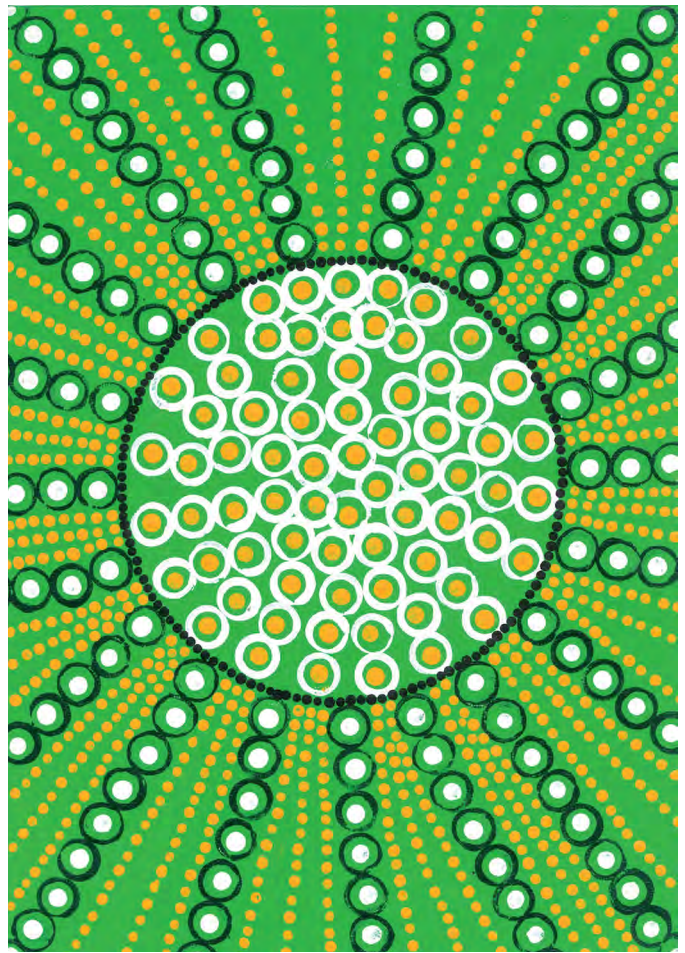
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Whadjuk Boodja Aboriginal Land



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Sites of cultural significance

1. WILGEE (Willagee)

Willagee was named after Wilgee Lake in 1878. The area was part of the lake systems that were quite prevalent in the days before settlement. The Noongar word “wilgee” means red ochre, which was found in abundance in and around the lakes in Willagee. Ochre, particularly red, was very precious and was traded to places as far away as Queensland. Along with having medicinal properties, wilgee clay was burnt in a fire to make powder, then mixed with grease to be used as body paint for ceremonies.

Willagee is also an important creation site as the Dreaming for the area is the emu. The area was known to be a large emu breeding ground. The Noongar words for emu are “widgee” (female) “waitj” (group) “wetj” (male). The traditional people not only ate the birds but also used their skins and feathers for clothing and decorations. The eggs were eaten and, when carefully blown, the shell was carved. Utensils were also made out of emu bones.

8. BOORAGOON LAKE

This area was a popular and permanent camping ground for the fishing and gathering season, particularly for edible shellfish like oysters. There were many shells found when developing the area.

9. MURDOCH UNIVERSITY SITE (inc North Lake)

The Murdoch University site was a burial ground. Graves were discovered when the University was being constructed. On the lower south east corner of the grounds the area was used for men’s business relating to burial procedures, whilst on the south west corner the area was designated for women’s business during burial ceremonies.

10. PINEY LAKES

Piney Lakes is a very significant site for the traditional custodians of the area as well as being a sacred place for women. It was the women’s area to perform ceremonies, to discuss women’s business and to take young boys through their level one initiation.

11. GOOLUGATUP (Point Heathcote)

Goolugatup is an Noongar word meaning the place of the children. Also referred to as Guleegatup or Gooleegatup, Point Heathcote was a permanent lookout, fishing and camping ground for the Noongar Beeliar people particularly Midgegooroo, Yagan and Mundy because the “Moondaap” (the blackness of the riverbank) was an excellent fishing ground. Also, the Point is where the men passed through their level two initiation ceremonies. The area was also known as “Kooyagoordup” (the place of the “Kooyar”- a species of frog).

12. DYOONDALUP (Burke Drive)

Aboriginal people mined the area for quartz, which was used for axes and spearheads.

It was also known to have been an area used for men’s business, tier three initiation level, which due to respecting the traditional laws cannot be discussed.

2. MARRADUNGUP (Atwell Gallery)

Place of death water. The Atwell Gallery site, along with the surrounding area, was a meeting place and camping ground for not only the traditional custodians but also many visiting clan groups. It was a place where meetings and Mandjar (type of fair) celebrations were held with other Noongar groups of the south west.

The older initiates, who were gathered along what is now known as Burke Drive, met up with other family members at the Alfred Cove site. The area was rich in food resources, offering fish, waterfowl, shellfish, vegetable roots and bulbs to name but a few.

Prior to settlement it was the starting point to the south west lake systems which were followed for the food and gathering seasons. North Lake Road followed the Noongar Dreaming lines down to the lake areas.

3. JENALUP (Blackwall Reach)

The place where the feet make a track (Jena means feet). This whole area is very sacred and has very strong ties with the Dreaming Stories of all Western Australian Aboriginal Peoples. It was also known for its fresh water supplies.

4. NIERGARUP (Point Preston)

Local Noongar people used this area as a ceremonial and camping ground. The whole area is known as an “Important Place”. It was also the first sighting area of white people, exploring the river.

5. YAGAN MIA (Wireless Hill)

This area was known as “Yagan’s Lookout”. It was an area he claimed as his own for he used it as a homebase, lookout, and a communication vantage point. The European settlers saw the importance of this area, for similar reasons. On the southern side of Wireless Hill there is a scar tree with the marking dated 1830. Scars were made to create utensils and/or shields. These trees can also mark out a territory, generally in a triangle.

13. DYOONDALUP (Point Walter)

Place of white sand (Dyoondal means white/fair hair). Dyundalup or Dyoondalup is a Noongar word meaning “place of long white flowing hair”, which describes the sand bar and the white waves breaking on it. Men used the sand bar to cross the river when they met the women. It was a favourite tribal ground. Fish would have been caught in the shallow rocky waters just north of the cliffs and yams dug up from the river bank.

14. QUAADA GABEE (Bicton foreshore)

Beautiful water (Quaada means beautiful, Gabee means water). The Bicton foreshore area used to contain a number of freshwater springs which were used by local Noongar.

15. MOONDAAP (Point Dundas)

The blackness of the river bank. Murray et al. (2003) locate Moondaap at Point Dundas whereas the City of Melville (1997) locate it at Point Heathcote. Moondaap is meant to represent the darkness of the water.

16. MARGAMANGUP (Lucky Bay foreshore)

The place of the bird’s nest in the tree. Margamangup has beautiful white sandy beaches. The shallow waters make it an ideal place to wade. Dolphins can often be seen chasing fish in the shallows.

17. KOOYAGOORDUP (Waylen Bay foreshore)

Kooyagoordup means the place of the Kooyar - a species of frog.

18. DOONTANBORO (Melville Water)

The big pelican river.

19. WAGOORJUP (Canning Bridge)

The place of the Waarkarl.

6. BATEMAN - 100 metres of Dean Road

Whilst developing this area there was a discovery of grindstone materials which in traditional times were used for sharpening axes and spearheads.

West of Bull Creek and including up to Leach Highway was another area of significance as artefacts were found during development. From oral history with Elders, it has been revealed that this area was known to have been a site of a large uproar with the early settlers and Red Coats. Many Noongar people are said to have died trying to protect their traditional lands and families.

7. MELVILLE WETLANDS

The wetlands comprised a complex chain of lakes, billabongs, waterholes and swamps. As a result of development many of these places of water no longer exist.

The need for water, an essential requirement for life, ensured that settlement was always near waterholes and lakes. Water bodies of all kinds hold spiritual qualities. The Waarkarl is the Dreaming ancestor and water creative spiritual force. Damaging the water areas is damaging the spirituality of the Waarkarl. All water sites have spiritual and cultural significance.

These wetlands provided an important link to cultural traditions, spiritual life and history. Teaching of oral history and main corroborees concerning the area was a regular occurrence. Lake systems formed main transport routes between the Swan River Noongar and the Murray River cultural groups.

During development, the largest numbers of artefacts were discovered in many wetland areas.



20. GABBI KOWANGULUP (Canning River - mouth)

Referred to as Gabbi Kowangulup in Murray et al. (2003). Gabbi generally refers to “water”. Bates (1929) indicates that Kowangulup may have been derived from “Kowain” laughing but Kowain also means “floating”.

21. BOORAGOON (Canning River - southern branch)

The open waters of the Canning as documented by Debra Hughes-Hallett, in the *Indigenous History of the Swan and Canning Rivers* document.

22. GABBILJEE (Bull Creek)

Prior to colonisation it is believed to be known as ‘the watery place at the end of the river’. At the time of colonisation the Bull Creek area was of considerable importance to the Noongar people as the wetlands provided many foods compared to other surrounding drier areas. Midgegooroo and his son Yagan were of the Aboriginal peoples living in the area and Yagan was a prominent member of the Beeliar group.

In December 1831, a servant of a settler named Butler shot dead one of Yagan’s friends who had been raiding his potato patch. Yagan and Midgegooroo retaliated by spearing another worker. Later in 1832 Yagan and a party of Aboriginal people ambushed two of Butler’s labourers killing William Gaze. Yagan was arrested, spending two months on Carnac Island before he escaped by stealing a dinghy and rowing to the shore. Yagan and others murdered two men, making their way to Canning from Bull Creek with provisions. Yagan and the others were declared outlaws. Midgegooroo was imprisoned in May 1833 and executed. Yagan was shot dead by two brothers, John and William Keats in July, 1833. Another Aboriginal man, Heegan and William Keats also died in the exchange. Yagan’s head was severed and smoked by a settler and sent to England. It was only returned in 1997 and was reburied in Upper Swan by the Noongar community in 2010.

23. TWO CAVES near Rocky Bay

Garungup place of Anger or place to be avoided. Believed to be the final resting place of the Waarkarl or rainbow serpent.