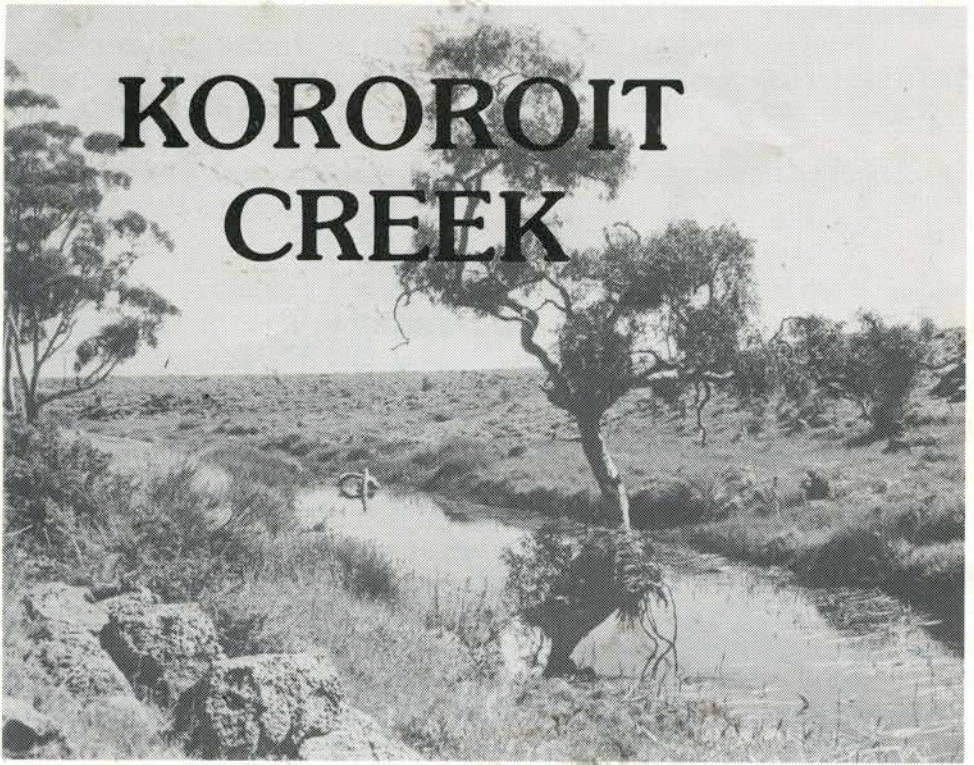


KOROROIT CREEK



KOROROIT CREEK: The headwaters of the Creek rise in the hills around Mt. Aitken, near Gisborne, and flow mainly through farmland across the Western Plains. The Creek enters the Metropolitan area at St. Albans, just north of Ballarat Road, cuts through Deer Park, Sunshine and Altona before reaching the sea at the Williamstown Rifle Range.

The Kororoit Creek is one of the major streams running through the Western Plains. The name "Kororoit" is thought to be derived from an Aboriginal word meaning male kangaroo. In the 1850s, it was also known as the Tea Tree Creek. Although not immediately remarkable, Kororoit Creek holds many surprises for those willing to explore it.

GEOLOGY: Kororoit Creek is of scientific interest as a classic example of creek formation over a basalt plain.

This plain covers the Western part of Melbourne but not the East. This different geology accounts largely for the different vegetation on the two sides of the city.

The basalt plain was created by volcanic activity about one to five million years ago. The underlying rock is three to four hundred million years old.

The nature of the underlying basalt structure has formed a creek that gains from and loses water to the surrounding underground systems in a way unique to this type of basalt plain, which is one of the largest in the world.

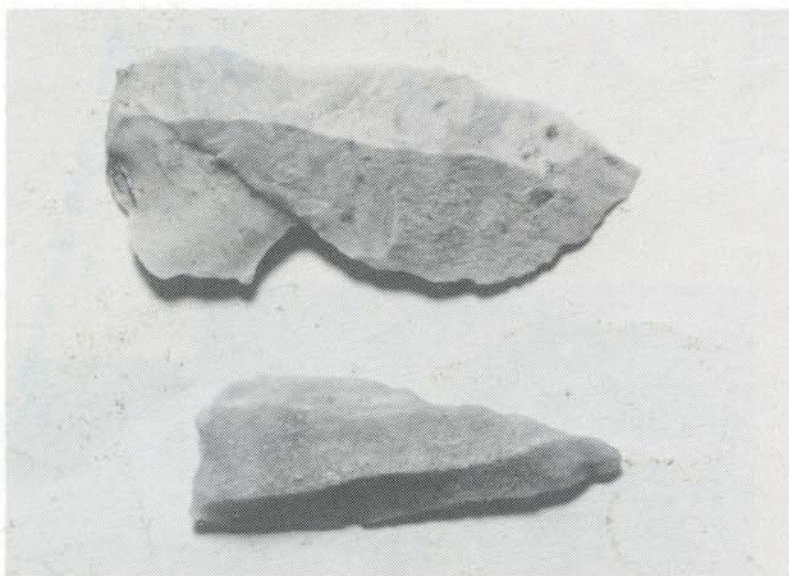


BIRDS: The mouth of the Kororoit Creek, next to the Williamstown Rifle Range, is part of a larger network of swamps, marshes and mudflats in the Altona Region. This wetlands region has only recently been recognised as one of the most important and diverse wetlands for birds both nationally and internationally.

More than 240 species, several rare and endangered, have been identified in these wetlands.

Further Reading: GARRETT, S., LANE, B., SCHULZ, M., & WOOD, K. **Birds of Port Phillip Bay**, Ministry for Planning and Environment, Victoria, Melbourne, 1986.

ABORIGINAL OCCUPATION: Aboriginals lived around the Kororoit Creek before the Europeans came. Nearly twenty sites of archeological interest have been identified along the Creek by the Victorian Archeological Survey. These sites are protected by law.



This photo shows a sample of the artifacts found at these sites. It is thought to be part of a spear or harpoon.

Further Reading: PRESLAND, G. **The Land of the Kulin**, Penguin, Melbourne, 1985.

RECENT SETTLEMENT: The earliest graziers around Melbourne, from Batman on, took their flocks west. The Kororoit Creek was an important source of fresh water for the early graziers on these treeless plains.

The Creek was later to be a barrier to the thousands of diggers on their way to the goldfields. These early travellers crossed the Creek at fords which later became places for bridges and hotels as the numbers swelled.

Many of these sites are easily identified as several bluestone bridges still exist and local hotels remain on these original sites. For example the Guiding Star in Brooklyn and the Deer Park Hotel.

The local bluestone used to construct these bridges and hotels was also used as a building material for much of Melbourne. As you walk around the city streets next time, consider that much of the bluestone you are seeing and walking on came from somewhere near the Kororoit Creek.

Further Information: **The Kororoit Creek: A History of Occupation** (Video and School Kit), Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, Melbourne, 1986.

WALK TOURS: Access to the Creek is limited, particularly in the upper reaches and rural areas as it mainly runs through private farmland.

There are, however, many places to walk and things to see by the Creek in the metropolitan area. These can usually be reached by car or bicycle and some by bus.

Four of these spots are described on the map, others can be found with the help of your street directory.

CAR TOURS: A car tour of the middle and upper reaches of the Creek will reveal many surprisingly picturesque scenes.

A three hour drive can take you past quite a few points of interest. Take the Calder Highway north-west of Melbourne. Twenty-five minutes will take you past Diggers Rest to The Gap.

There is a drive-in lookout on top of The Gap where you can stop and look out over the plains.

About two kilometres further on the right is a bluestone bridge, built in 1861. It can be reached by a small dirt road to the right.

Back towards Melbourne three or four kilometres on your right is Mount Aitken Road, just past the Sunbury turnoff. This road crosses three branches of the Kororoit Creek, each with a distinctly different view. You will often see cockatoos, galahs, magpies and rosellas in this area.

About five kilometres along this road is a T-intersection with Blackhills Road. Turn left and follow the Creek down to the Diggers Rest Road. Here you go right for half a kilometre to Holden Road where you turn left. A kilometre along Holden Road brings you back to Kororoit Creek and the remains of an early bluestone and timber bridge.

Continue another kilometre to Leakes Road and turn right. That large hill on your right is Mount Kororoit, the remains of a volcanic cone from the volcanic period that produced the Western Plains.

Another three kilometres will bring you to the Keilor - Melton Road. A two kilometre detour to the right will bring you to another bluestone bridge where you can see some fine examples of red river gums.

Traffic is often heavy on this road and parking is difficult. You may have to park some distance from the bridge and walk back a couple of hundred yards.

Back to Leakes Road and another three kilometres will bring you to the Western Highway. Turn left to return to Melbourne.

