

Kimbolton State Forest - The Kimbolton Picnic Area

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Photo: Kimbolton State Forest

The Kimbolton Forest provided early Victorian settlers with a rich supply of resources including timber products, gold, cropping and grazing opportunities. Go exploring in the forest to find evidence of these uses and discover the rich diversity of plants and animals found here.

Our Box-Ironbark forests tell a fascinating story of change and survival. How you use the forest today will shape our forests future. How will you help shape the next chapter?

Kimbolton State Forest

Situated approximately 130 km north west of Melbourne, (25 km south east of Bendigo) the Kimbolton State Forest (managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment) is popular for school and orienteering group camps and other events, with many kilometres of forest roads and tracks. Lake Eppalock is also nearby.

Getting here

From Melbourne head north west along the Calder Highway to Kyneton. At Kyneton head north to Redesdale along the Heathcote-Kyneton Rd. Once in Redesdale take the Bendigo-Redesdale Rd to the left and head west. About 11 kms from Redesdale, turn right onto Lyell Road. Then turn right onto Twin Rivers Road and you are in Kimbolton State Forest.

History of Kimbolton

Native inhabitants were known as the mighty Golburn River tribe and the Campaspe River Tribe – both clans belonged to the Dja Dja Wurrug Clan. There was a time of conflict between the white settlers and Aborigines and a number of “brief but bloody encounters broke out”. (Randell, p16)

“The local tribes of natives were not particularly numerous and it is noticeable that their ovens were not nearly as large as those, say of the Lower Loddon district. I presume this could be taken to indicate smaller tribes. “Canoe trees” were quite common in the district where the natives had removed sheets of bark to make their canoes and, near the Campaspe at least, stone cutting tools were often turned up with the plough...” (Randell, p 13)

It is said “... that the Campaspe blacks numbered about 40 able bodied warriors...” (Randell, p16). Records indicate that the “natives seemed to have died out there by the 1860’s...” largely attributed to disease.

The Campaspe Plains, situated between Mt Ida, Mt Alexander and Mt Macedon has two main rivers flowing through it as well as a number of creeks – this reliable water supply led to the area’s early development as sheep farming country.

A passage from the diary of George A Robinson (Chief Protector of Aborigines) written January 1840 describes the area:

... When leaving this forest belt, and opening out upon the plain, the change of scent was delightfully pleasant. Where Mt Hutton’s House stands is a beautiful sight, with extensive plains before it and some thousands of acres of good sheep country, mainly open forest hills, extending tens of thousands of acres on every side Two large paddocks were fenced in with split post and rail, two rails...

During September 1836 Major Mitchell led an expedition through the Campaspe Plains and found evidence that ‘...an unknown white man had proceeded them...’. Evidence included wheel tracks, bleached horse and bull bones, the remains of a light horse drey. (Randell, p13)

In the 1840's the Costerfield district was dominated by large pastoral leases (runs) on Crownland. The Campaspe Plains pastoral run covered most of the land around Axedale and was described by Randell (1982, p 299) as '....the absolute pastoral frontier ...'.

Back in these days runs were not fenced and "flocks of about 700 sheep were moved during the day by a shepherd and confined by moveable hurdles at night with, very often, a watchman to keep wild dogs away from the flock. Cattle ran loose and were mustered about once a year ..." (Randell, p19)

The original run altered over the years including changes in ownership, alienation from the Crown to become freehold land, subdivision and finally being reacquired by the crown over a hundred years later for the construction the Eppalock Weir and the lake itself. Today, much of the Kimbolton run lies at the bottom of Lake Eppalock. The Kimbolton Homestead was located 2km NE of the picnic area (where the spillway is now located).



Photo: Kimbolton Homestead site – under water where Eppalock spillway is now located – some of the garden still survives today

Kimbolton - The Good Old Days

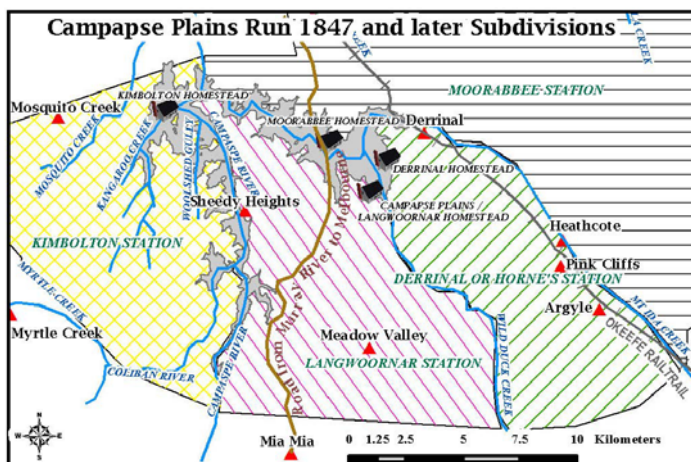


Image: Campaspe Plains Run 1847 and later subdivisions

- 1838 – The first pastoral lease over Campaspe Plains was taken out by Captain Charles Hutton. He and his party overlanded sheep from Sydney. The summer of 1838-39 was extremely dry and Hutton was forced to keep his stock continually on the move chasing food and water. A wheat crop was also planted during this time and failed.
- 1844 – Stone Head Station built at Moorabbee. The large sandstone homestead built on a hill overlooking the Heathcote-Bendigo Road (north of the Moorabbee Lodge Caravan Park). The ruins are still visible today.
- 1851 – Gold was discovered at Castlemaine and Bendigo. Campaspe Plains was ideally located within one day's travel of both of the goldfields. Then owner, John Paterson became a very rich man driving stock to the goldfields where he was paid for his stock with nuggets of gold.
- 1852 – Gold was found near the front gate of the Kimbolton run and was worked by about 50 men.
- 1852 – The Campaspe Plains Run was divided into two: The Moorabbee Run and the Derrinal Run. Later the Derrinal Run was further divided into Derrinal Station and Langwoornar Station.



Photo: Derrinal Homestead – still standing proudly present day

- Moorabbee was divided into Moorabbee Station and Kimbolton Station - Kimbolton was named after a Tasmanian run. Improvements were made such as: "a good stone house with detached outbuildings of stone, garden paddock and washpen" at Moorabbee and "a weatherboard cottage, men's huts, woodshed and two paddocks..." at Langwoornar (Randell p25). During this time additional acres of freehold land were purchased.
- 1853 – The road from the Murray to Melbourne had a lot of traffic during the gold rush and the Langwoornar Homestead was turned into a public house, the "Gold Bag Inn".

- The Matheson's Hotel and Store operated at the Murray Road and Sandhurst Road junction (Knowsley). Goods arrived by horse and cart from Melbourne. It also served as the Cobb and Co stop for changing horses, and was a popular watering hole for travelling miners. The building still stands today but is now a private residence.



Photo: Matheson's Hotel and Store today

- 1853/54 – The 4 bedroom Kimbolton Homestead and buildings were constructed on a rise overlooking the river. Sandstone was quarried from a hill just below the site and local timbers were used for the shingle roof and split picket fences. The kitchen was made with wattle and daub and water was supplied from an underground tank. Fruit trees and shrubs were planted.
- Later additions included a woolshed and a number of split timber slab buildings for use as stables, a black smith's shop, mens huts. The woolshed and stock yards were built on the hill slope and remained in use until the late 1890's when it was destroyed by fire. Remnants of the woolshed could still be seen until the area was flooded by Lake Eppalock.
- 1854 – Morrabbe run: 20,000 sheep, Langwoornar run and Kimbolton run: 15,000 sheep.
- By 1858 the run boundary was marked with brush and log fences – this did away with the need for shepherds as sheep could be put out to graze. Eight acres of land at the junction of Kangaroo Creek and the Campaspe River was fenced, ploughed and cultivated.
- 1863 – Freeholding was used by early settlers to secure all permanent water sources and keep other selectors out - various small freehold blocks were added to the run until 1976. The first wire fencing in the district using "bull wire" was erected during this time and merino sheep grazed and bred. A saw mill was set up on the Kimbolton run and sawn timber was sold throughout the district until the 1870's.
- 1867 – Gold was discovered about a mile from the Kimbolton homestead and a small gold rush followed.
- 1870-71 – Further extensions and improvements were made to the Kimbolton Homestead. A stone storeroom, three bedrooms and a bluestone kitchen were added. The roof of the original sandstone cottage was replaced with corrugated iron, the walls raised and a verandah was added. The old part of the building was plastered with pebble roughcast.

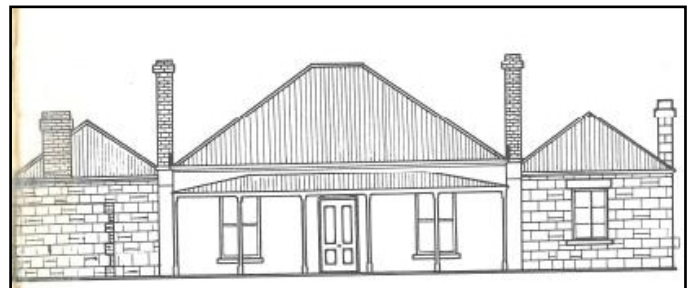


Photo: Langwoornar Run today – near old homestead site

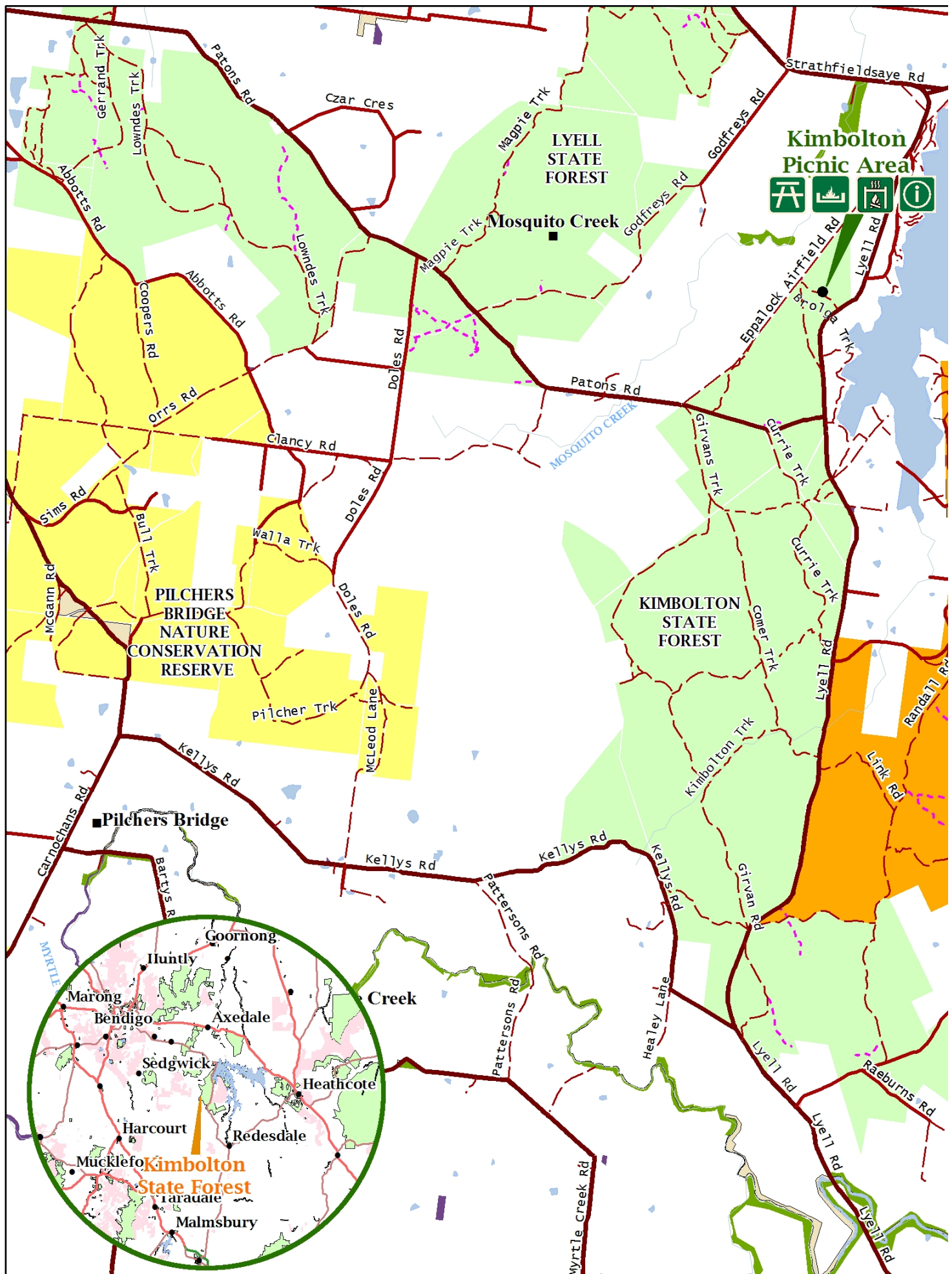


Photo: Kimbolton Run Blacksmith shop / stockyards site revealed during 2007 drought at Lake Eppalock

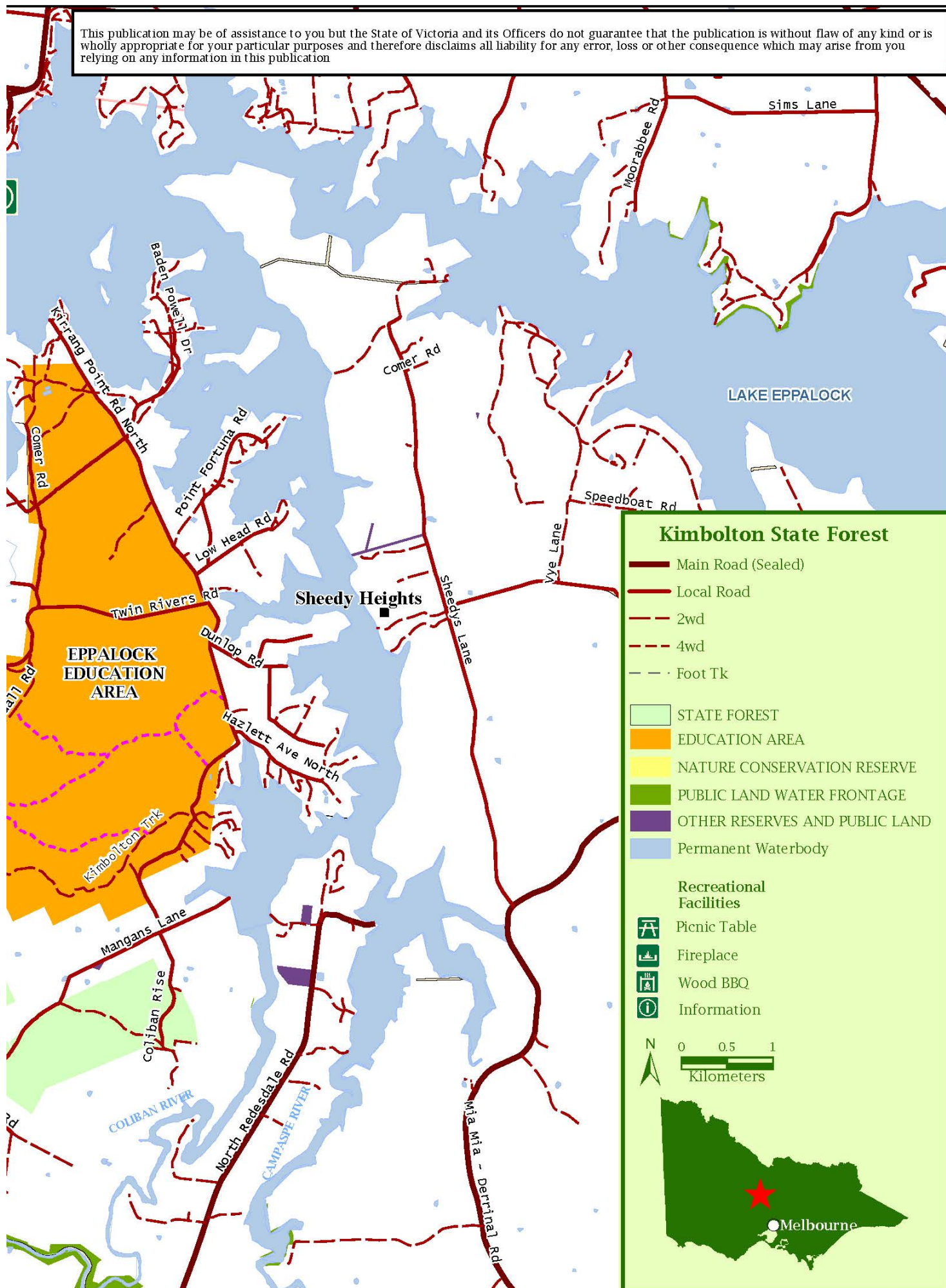
Downstream from the woolshed a natural river ford (Patterson's Crossing) was used as washing yards for the sheep before shearing. A slab mens hut for workers was built on a high bank below the sheep wash.



Picture: Kimbolton Homestead, JO Randell



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1877 – Ringbark camps were set up over the Kimbolton run to clear the land of trees during Andrew O’Keefe’s ownership. Workers lived in huts and tents. Timber treatment was also carried out on the run. O’Keefe built himself a large sandstone house and outbuildings near Axedale and carried out farming and dairying. He used to travel around the countryside in his buggy pulled by a pair of horses.



Photo: Countryside left behind from land clearing

O’Keefe brought his sheep to Kimbolton from his other properties for shearing each year. During this time liver fluke was common in sheep running by the river and they were dosed with tobacco and chemicals.

He ran things economically during his 11 years as owner and made a large profit. Casual labor was brought in for shearing, timber treatment and fencing. There was one housekeeper and one man living in the homestead and another man that came to work at Kimbolton each day.

- By the 1890’s rabbits had become a serious problem in the area. Trappers were used, as well as carbon for burrow fumigation and poisoned oats.
- 1886 - The size of Kimbolton run was reduced as land was forfeited and set aside as Kimbolton State Forest.
- 1888 – The railway line from Bendigo to Heathcote, contracted by O’Keefe. The railway station was within 12 kms of Kimbolton
- 1889 – Kimbolton was sold again during a land boom. Farming, grazing merino sheep and dairying were carried out at both Kimbolton and Langwoornar.
- 1891 Further extensions carried out at Kimbolton Station. An unused hardwood schoolhouse was purchased from One Eye

and re-erected at Kimbolton as a dining room and pantry.

- During the 1890’s a track was cut through the Black Forest creating a road from the Murray River, through the Campaspe Plains to the settlement of Melbourne. Around this time there were three State Schools operating in the area: Mosquito Creek, Axedale and Langwoornar.

There were two crossings to get across the Campaspe River, one private, one public. When water levels were high it was not always possible to cross, especially with sheep so the Shire Council put in Killeens Bridge.



Photo: Usually submerged Killeens bridge revealed during 2007 drought at Lake Eppalock

- During the 1890’s there was a pastoral slump. Timber from previous ringbarking was sold to Bendigo for firewood and to keep the mine boilers going. Wood was carted by horses and drays to Bendigo or Axedale. Kimbolton Station had its own small store for flour, sugar, tea, vegetables, tobacco, shears etc which was sold to employees. Meat was also sold to workers and neighbours as well as to Melbourne.
- By the early 1900’s the area was a thriving community. A hotel was established at Lyall and was frequented by boundary riders. A post and telegraph office was operating at Axedale and a mail service delivered mail 2 or 3 days a week to Kimbolton. Groceries were also delivered each week from the general stores at Heathcote and Axedale by wagonette. Goods Trains ran from Axedale to Bendigo and Melbourne (wool and grain).

Rabbits were still a major problem at Kimbolton. Wire netting was imported from England and the homestead block was trenched/fenced to form a barrier to rabbits. Rabbits remained a huge problem and control works were ongoing every year.

- 1902 – major wide spread drought devastated the area. More blocks of land were freeholded and sold off. The old station woolshed burnt down and was replaced by a new sawn timber shed.

The Kimbolton run now consisted of 3 large freehold areas: the homestead, Bald Hill and Mosquito Creek as well as a lease over Kimbolton State Forest. The forest run had now “become scrubby in many places with thicker timber growth”. (Randell, p84) and was not as valuable for grazing as it was previously.

Further renovations to the homestead – ceilings were put in both bluestone wings, and an electric bell system was installed throughout the house to the kitchen. A gunroom was also built, which held a vast array of shotguns, rifles, ammunition.

Hamilton, the new owner was also a keen gardener and barrels of water were pulled on a sledge by horses up hill to the homestead. At this time, Kimbolton produced its own milk, cream and butter, poultry and vegetables. Pigs were also farmed for station use. Workers lived in a hut below the house.

Many “Melbourne society” and local parties were held at the Kimbolton homestead and Kimbolton even had its own golf course!

- 1907 – A huge picnic for the children from the district was held at Kimbolton – a merry go round was hired from Bendigo.

Further renovations were carried out at Kimbolton. More verandahs were added, a new bedroom added, and all external stonework was painted white to match the wooden additions. A gable roof was added to the old courtyard, forming another large room. Walls were removed and rooms enlarged, a number of sleepouts were built, a storeroom was converted into a bathroom with a water heater. The kitchen fireplace was replaced with a large wood stove and an acetylene lighting plant was installed. The sawmill hut was moved and converted into a shearers hut. Improvements were also added to the barn so that it could hold machinery and horse boxes were added. A pump was put on the river for watering the trees and shrubs he had planted in the garden. Most of the wooden three rail fences were replaced with wire fencing. The first motorcar came to

Kimbolton and a garage was added to the homestead to house and repair the “Oakland”.

- Sheep and over 100 horses ran on Kimbolton by 1910. Sharefarmers grew crops in cultivated areas on the run. Many parties were held at the homestead.
- 1918 – General farming operations were carried out and additional horse stalls built. Some of the wild horses were broken in while the rest were sold to Melbourne.
- 1922 – Further extensive renovations were made to the homestead. A hot water service was installed as well as a larger gas lighting plant and water pump. A private phone line was constructed connecting Kimbolton to Axedale.
- During this time many of the creek flats were cultivated and cropped, sheep and red poll cattle were run. Additional paddocks were purchased. Cropping was carried out and horsefeed and grain supplied to the local markets.



Photo: Kimbolton Homestead (1922) – the Homestead site and half of the station now lies submerged under Lake Eppalock.

- 1930's - Further additions were made at the homestead, such as installation of a home lighting plant and a tennis court. Sugar gums were planted along the drive.
- 1954 - The old homestead was demolished and a new one built in its place. New sheds were built, the property re-fenced and additional freehold land was purchased. Power was connected to the property in the late 1950s.



Photo: Usually Submerged Kimbolton Run Paddock fencing revealed during 2007 drought at Lake Eppalock.

- 1960 – The Kimbolton run was bought back by the Crown (acquired by the State River and Water Supply Commission) for the construction of Eppalock Weir. Today, much of the Kimbolton Run lies at the bottom of Lake Eppalock, thousands of acres of good grazing land lost to ensure a permanent water supply for agriculture and to supply water to Bendigo.
- Today this man made lake is a major attraction for water sports such as skiing, speed boating, fishing, sailing, canoeing and swimming, however, relics are still revealed during times of drought.



Photo: Lake Eppalock.

Geology and Geomorphology

The low rolling hills of the Kimbolton countryside consist of ancient, hard and fractured Ordovician rock up to 65 million years old, which was originally deposited deep under the sea. Rocks mainly are sandstone, mudstone, black shale and quartz conglomerates. Marine fossils can be found in the area. Around 7 million years ago a basalt flow buried the original bedrock

along the along the Campaspe River. Ongoing weathering, wind and water movement over the following years has produced younger clay, sand, silt and gravel deposits throughout the area. Patches of White Hills Gravel are also found in the area.

Another unique geological feature of this area is the Permian Glacial Pavement rocks north and south of Eppalock and glacial sediments (such as "Dunn's Rock" and "Kellams Rock"). During the ice age (up to 280 million years ago) large glaciers moving over the countryside, scoured out sediments, pulverized bedrock, polished and cut grooves into bedrock in the direction of ice movement. When the ice melted boulders etc where left behind in areas of entirely different rock types, such as a 100 Tonne granite block known as 'The Stranger' near Derrinal.



Photo: Kellams Rock.

Nature's Living Treasures

"The timbers included redgum along the rivers and creeks, yellow box and greybox in parts and stringy bark, iron bark, white ironbark and redbark on the ranges. For the most part it was park-like, open, forest country with patches of thick scrub, and the steep basalt hills near the rivers, in places, were relatively clear of timber although usually rather stoney. Apart from the eucalypts there were wattles and other small trees including wild cherries... Game was reasonably plentiful and the streams abounded in fish..."
(Randell, p 13)

The hilly shallow stony soils around Kimbolton mostly support Box-Ironbark, Heathy Dry Forest and Grassy Dry Forest vegetation with a diverse shrub understorey and ground layer of native grasses, orchids and lilies. Patches of Grassy Woodland and Plains Grassy Woodland occur to the east (Langwooniar).

Eucalypts found in the area include: Grey Box (*E.microcarpa*), Red Box (*E.polyanthemos*) and Red Stringybark (*E.macrorhyncha*), Red Ironbark (*E.tricarpa*), Yellow Gum (*E.leucoxylon*) and Yellow Box (*E.melliodora*).

Rare plants found in the area include: Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*), Ausfeld's Wattle (*Acacia ausfeldii*), Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens* subsp. *Spinescens*) and Blunt-leaf Pomaderris (*Pomaderris helianthemifolia* subsp. *minor*). Typical of the more common and diverse range of understory species are shrubs are Cat's Claw Grevillea (*Grevillea alpine*), Spiky Guinea-flower (*Hibbertia exutiacies*), Parrot Peas (*Dillwynia* spp) and various wattle species.



Photo: Kimbolton State Forest wildflowers

The floral diversity attracts a number of rare birds, including many of the now threatened woodland bird species such as the Black-chinned honeyeater, Brown Treecreeper, Brown-headed Honeyeater, Diamond Firetail, Fuscous Honeyeater, Grey-crowned Babbler, Hooded Robin, Jacky Winter, Little Lorikeet, Red-capped Robin, Regeant Honeyeater, Speckled Warbler, Swift Parrot and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater.

The biggest and most mysterious of our owls – the Powerful Owl, can be seen roosting with the remains of prey clutched in its sharp talons. Other birds seen overhead include the Pied Cormorant, Grey Goshawke, Eastern Great Egret and White-bellied Sea Eagle. There are also numerous beautiful but more common bird species throughout the forests.

Many species of reptiles, frogs and mammals can be seen throughout the bush at different times of the year. Mammals include the Brush-tailed Phascogale and eastern grey kangaroo. Reptiles include rare species such as the lace goanna, striped Legless Lizard and Woodland Blind Snake.



Photo: Top left striped Legless Lizard; bottom left Common Froglet; right Yellow Tufted Honeyeater

Activities to enjoy in the State forest

There are many activities you can enjoy in the forest, some of which include:

- Get active! Walk along one of the many tracks around the forest, ride your horse or bike along the bush roads and appreciate the beauty of the forest. Be sure to stay on formed roads when riding.
- Find a nice spot to relax, camp or have a picnic, remember to look after the forest by taking your rubbish home with you.
- Take your dog for a walk. Making sure your dog is under control at all times and does not disturb other visitors or harm wildlife.
- Try your luck fossicking or prospecting. All prospectors require a Miner's Right. This lasts two years and costs around \$30. You can purchase a Miner's Right online from the Department of Primary Industries website at www.depi.vic.gov.au. Remember to re-fill any holes you dig.
- Enjoy a car or motorbike tour of the forest, exploring the extensive road network. Make sure you are licensed and registered and always stay on formed roads.
- Test your hunting skills with licensed firearms and protect the forest from pest animals such as foxes and rabbits.
- Explore and search the forest for clues that give us evidence from the past – remember to leave everything as you found it.

Lets look after our living museum!

- All native plants, animals, historic sites and geographical features are protected by law.
- Campfires are part of the outdoor experience. However sparks can easily start the bush burning. You can take care with fire by observing all fire regulations and Total Fire

Ban days, always use existing fireplaces where possible or 30 cm deep trenches, collect only dead wood from the ground for campfires, ensure your fires is less than 1 metre square and at least 3 metres clear of burnable material, never leave fires unattended, and ensure fires are safe and that they are completely extinguished when you leave.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

Look out for old mine shafts when walking through the forest.

Attractions: Walks, Rides and Drives

Kimbolton Recreation Site:

Walk around and enjoy nature or submerge yourself in history - this site has both! The flora diversity attracts a number of rare birds and other fauna. You may also find evidence of past gold mining activities scattered throughout the bush.



Photo: Kimbolton Recreation Site

For more information

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information contact the Department of Sustainability and Environment office at Maryborough (☎ 5461 0800), Bendigo (☎ 5430 4444) or DEPI's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Visit DEPI's website

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au>

The Kimbolton State Forest is managed for a wide range of uses including catchment protection, timber production, recreation and conservation. If you are interested in how State Forests are managed visit the Department's website on the Internet.

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Acknowledgements

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- [The Matheson's Hotel / Store] (Photo: Bridge Connection, Edition 39 May 2012, Community Newspaper for the Mia Mia-Redesdale Region)
- [Kimbolton Homestead], (Photo: Randell, J.O (John Ormond) *Pastoral settlement in northern Victoria. Volume 2, The Campaspe District*, Chandos, Burwood, Vic, 1982).
- [Kimbolton Homestead] (Diagram: Randell, John Ormond (1976) *Kimbolton*. Melbourne: Queensberry Hill Press)
- [Drought Photos]<http://outerlimits4x4.com>
- [Kimbolton Run Blacksmith shop / stockyards site revealed during 2007 drought at Lake Eppalock] (Photo: <http://outerlimits4x4.com>)
- [Usually submerged Killeens bridge revealed during 2007 drought at Lake Eppalock] (Photo: <http://outerlimits4x4.com>)
- [Usually submerged Killeens bridge revealed during 2007 drought at Lake Eppalock] (Photo: <http://outerlimits4x4.com>)
- [Usually Submerged Kimbolton Run Paddock fencing revealed during 2007 drought at Lake Eppalock] (Photo: <http://outerlimits4x4.com>)
- [Kellams Rock] (Photo: Linex Pty Ltd. *Rocks around Bendigo - Heathcote region*. http://www.linex.com.au/rab/rab_heathcote.html)
- [Striped Legless Lizard, Common Froglet, Yellow Tufted Honeyeater] (Photo: DEPI/McCann)
- [all other photos] (DEPI/Mary Camilleri)