

## The Historic Waanyarra Area Dunolly State Forest

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*The historic mining township of Waanyarra is found in the Dunolly State Forest. It joins part of the Box and Ironbark belt that covers from Stawell in the south west to Wodonga in the north east. Many natural attractions can be found in the area as well as remnants from early Aborigines and European settlers.*

*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?*

### Dunolly State Forest

Situated 200 km north west of Melbourne, (50 km west of Bendigo), the Dunolly State Forest (managed by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries) is a popular camping and fossicking area with many kilometres of forest roads and tracks.

### Getting there

From Melbourne head north west along the Calder Highway, turning left onto the Pyrenees Highway towards Maryborough. At Maryborough, head north to Dunolly along the Maryborough– Dunolly Rd. Once in Dunolly take the Dunolly- Bridgewater Rd. About 8 kms from Dunolly, on the right of the road is the site of the old Waanyarra Township.

### History of Waanyarra

Initially this area was, occupied by Aborigines of the Dja Wurrung nation. In the Dja Wurrung area there were 16 tribes that all spoke a similar dialect. Only a few known relics of Aboriginal occupation have survived the turbulent early days of European Settlement. The Rock wells near Maryborough, Carisbrook's ceremonial stone arrangements and a few canoe trees, remain as signs of aboriginal traditional territories. By 1879 Chief of the Dja Wurrung, Munangabum was the last survivor of his tribe to live in a natural state in his own locality.

The original name chosen for Waanyarra was Beverly. Despite this the area was called Jones' Creek, after a prospector who camped at the creek. Then in 1861 the area was surveyed and officially named Waanyarra, after the aboriginal name meaning 'running water'.



Photo: Members of the Lockett and Scholes family of Waanyarra at a shaft with a windlass

### Life in the historic town of Waanyarra

Waanyarra has been through a number of different phases throughout its history.

- In **1852 to 1858** the discovery of gold led to a series of large rushes to the area. Initially the type of mining was shallow alluvial, cemented gravel and quartz reef mining. Deep lead mining took off later.
- Waanyarra became a bustling town, which was known to have produced the purest gold in the world, being 99.9% pure.
- Waanyarra was popular for the large amount of alluvial nuggets found here. Alluvial 'rushes' were constantly occurring and the chance discovery of a nugget attracted hundreds of men to the district in the space of a few hours.
- From **1859—1888**, the large mining companies took over from the individual miners. Steam powered machinery and the arrival of the railway also expanded the regions timber industry, providing a boost to sleeper and firewood production.
- When the depression hit (**1889—1902**) many miners had to return to fossicking for a living. Quartz tailings were lucratively re-treated by the new process of cyaniding to extract the gold.
- **1903-1920's**. A slump in quartz mining led to a reduced demand for mining timber, causing the local timber industry to diversify into the distilling of eucalyptus oil. Remnants can be seen in the Nature Conservation Reserve across the Bridgewater-Dunolly Rd.
- **1930—Present**. During the depression and in the decades following, the old goldfields were reworked and some new ground prospected. The

popularity of metal detecting has renewed interest in the old goldfields. Many people today still come to the area to try to find their fortune and to enjoy the rich heritage and diversity of the area.



Photo: Ploughing the fields

### Nature's Living Treasures

The forest and woodlands of the Dunolly area are dominated by Box and Ironbark eucalypts and boasts a diverse range of understorey species. Eucalypts found in the area include Yellow Gum, Grey Box, Red Ironbark, Red Box and Red Stringybark. There are also remnants of Redgum and Yellow Box in the lower areas.

Visit the forest in the Spring and Summer months, and enjoy the array of colours from the wildflowers, look for species such as; golden wattle, flaming heath, cranberry heath, twiggy bush pea, leafless current bush, gold dust wattle, spreading wattle and cats-claws grevillea. If you look carefully you may even find delicate native orchids like the wax-lip orchid, pink fingers, blue caladenia and leopard orchids.



Photos: Cranberry Heath, Cats Claw Grevillia, bush pea

### Activities to enjoy in the State forest

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

- Walk along one of the many tracks and appreciate the beauty of the forest;
- Experience the bush as a living museum – search for clues that give us evidence from the past. Remember to leave everything as you found it.
- smell the eucalyptus after the rain; watch the changing colours of the bush as the seasons come and go;

- look for the delicate wildflowers that endure tough conditions;
- enjoy the sight of kangaroos bounding through the forest and surprise a lonely wallaby resting in a pool of shade;
- search for mud nests made by native wasps making sure you look and don't touch;
- be delighted by echidnas as they waddle around the forest floor;
- marvel at the large bull-ant nests
- listen to the hum of insects, the crackle of dry leaves under foot and the call of the many birds in the area.
- see native wildflowers growing in their natural setting.

### Nature's Living Treasures

- 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.
- Camping and picnicking is a great way to relax and enjoy the Box –Ironbark surroundings. Most of the camping spots are informal bush camps suitable for the self – sufficient camper. 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.
- Try your luck by fossicking or prospecting with a current Miner's Right. Remember any holes created by prospecting must be filled in.
- 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 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

### The Golden Triangle Bicycle Track

Approximately **24 km**,

The Golden Triangle Bicycle Track passes through the Dunolly Forest, it starts at the Dunolly Town Hall and proceeds for kilometers on forest tracks and roads around Dunolly.



### Waanyarra Walking Track

**Distance:** approximately 6.8 km return

**Time:** 2 hours return

**Gradient:** Gentle Hills

**Quality of Path:** Formed track, some obstacles

**Quality of Markings:** Signposted

**Steps:** Occasional steps

**Experience required:** No experience required

The Waanyarra Walking Track is a loop that starts and finishes at the Waanyarra Recreation Area. The walk takes you through old gold workings, what was once the old historic Waanyarra Township and past the old cemetery (see map).



### Waanyarra Forest Drive

**4.2 km, 1/2 hour leisurly driving time,**



**Take in the history of the area on the Waanyarra Forest Drive!**

The Waanyarra Forest Drive passes through the Dunolly State Forest, taking in points of historic interest around the former Waanyarra Township. Stop for a picnic lunch or a short forest walk along the way.

Be aware of other road users, particularly bike riders and drive according to the existing road and weather conditions (Note – A section of the circuit is two-wheel drive in dry weather only).

Set your vehicle's trip meter to zero at the start of the drive. The distances noted in the feature descriptions indicate the distance of each feature from the start of the drive. Note that trip meters may vary from vehicle to vehicle.

### 1. Waanyarra Township 0 km

**Located on the right hand side of Dunolly Rd coming from Dunolly.**

Step back in time to the late nineteenth century, the area around where you are now standing, was once a thriving gold mining town, which supported 2 hotels, several stores, a school and a Post Office, which remained open until the 1920's. If you look carefully enough you will find evidence from the old township all throughout the bush. Walk along the creek and see if you can find the foundations of the Jones' Creek School No. 339. The school operated for an average of 16 pupils from 1857 - 1873.

### 2. Waanyarra Historic Cemetery 1.6 km

**Go down Waanyarra Cemetery Rd, the cemetery is on your left- hand side when coming from Dunolly Rd.**

You are now at the resting place for many of Waanyarra's founders and towns people. Many of the graves here are not marked and some are outside the

boundaries of the cemetery. Graves date from 1856–1990.

### 3. Waanyarra Recreation Site 2.2 km

**Proceed down Waanyarra Cemetery Rd, the picnic and camping area is on the right hand side coming from Dunolly Road.**

Take a break and have a relaxing stroll around the picnic ground. See what evidence you can find from the old mining sites, can you find the old puddler? You can also find evidence of old homesteads with the presence of the mulberry and quince trees. The bush is alive with history.

### 4. Early Settlement Of Waanyarra 3.1 km

**Continue down Waanyaara Cemetery Rd until you come to a sign on your right hand side which says Early Settlement of Waanyaara.**

The large flat area that you see along Jones Ck was perfect ground for settlers to establish camp. The Police Camp was set up not far from here in 1853. Imagine the area lined with canvas tents with miners from all walks of life, starting out new, trying their luck to find some precious gold.

### 5. The 'Welcome Inn' Mortons Old Hotel 3.9 km

**Go past the stone crossing on the creek, look out on your left for the stone masonry building.**

Built by convict Micheal Morton in 1850 as a replica of his home in Ireland. This building served as a home for Micheal's family of eight, a provisioning store and also operated as a public bar for countless miners. Just picture all the exhausted, dirty miners crowding in here to quench their dry throats with soothing ale.

### 6. Waanyarra School No 1879 & Cricket 4.2km

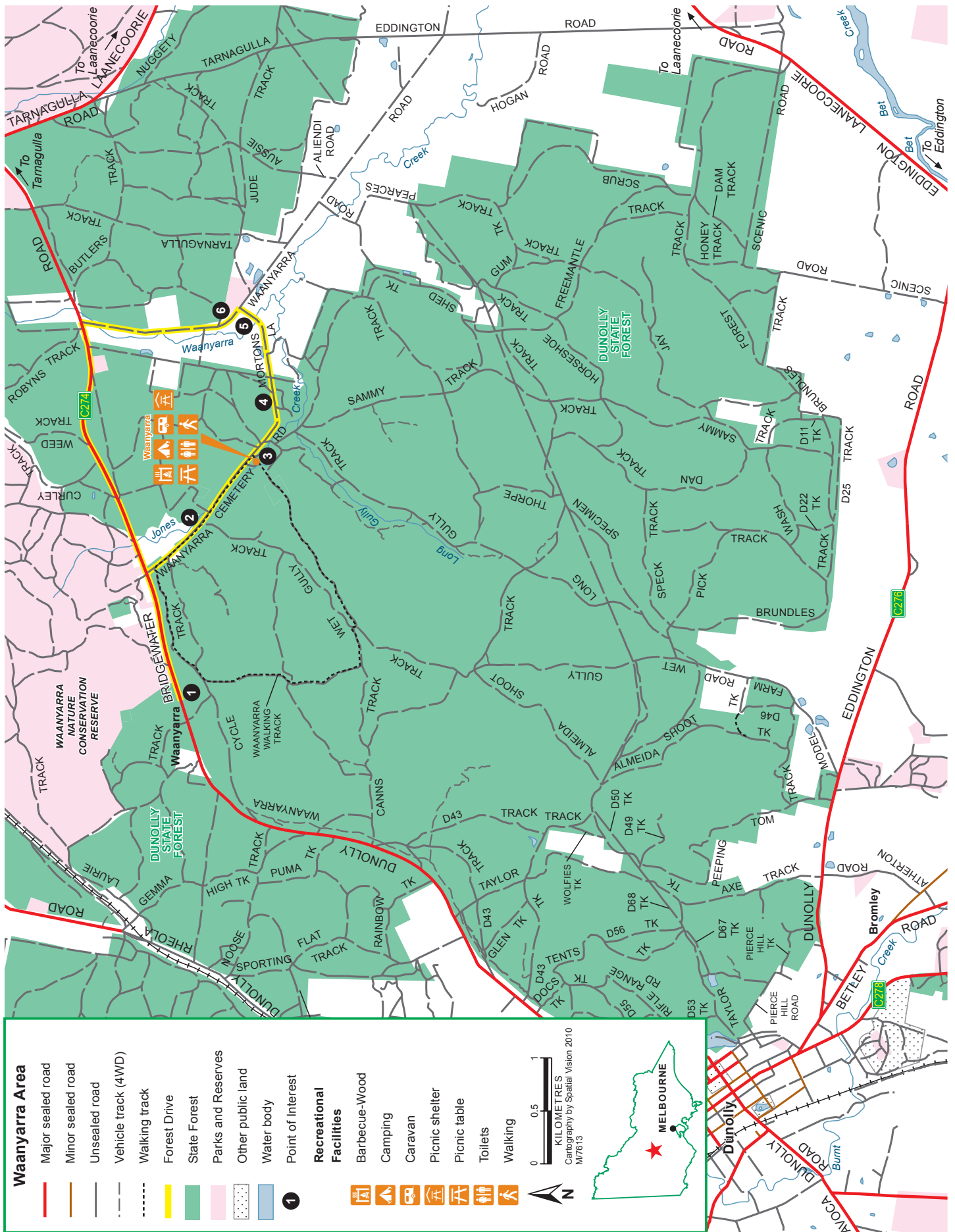
**At the end of Waanyaara Cemetery Rd, turn left onto Waanyarra Rd, directly on your right is the school site.**

In 1877 a new school was built at this site, and later a teachers residence was built. In 1903 there were around 65 students occupying this one room school. Not far from here was the cricket ground where many town picnics and games were held. Can you hear the laughing of children and the call of the batsman echo through the bush.



Photo: Cutting Chaff at Jim Pearces Farm (c1935)

To complete the drive, continue down Waanyarra Rd to Dunolly-Bridgewater Rd and turn right to return to the Waanyarra Township.



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### For more information

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information contact the Department of Environment and Primary Industries 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 Dunolly 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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