

ABOUT THE WAYILWAN PEOPLE

Wayilwan Country

Our Wayilwan ancestors were responsible for managing country within the natural waterways of the lower Macquarie floodplains.

This included country on the western side of the lower foothills of the Warrumbungles ranges near Gulargambone including the Castlereagh River then north-west to the junction of the Barwon near Walgett, the Macquarie River, then across to along the lower Bogan in the west (see map).

Surrounding our country was that of the Gamilaroi to the east, the Wiradjuri on the south and the Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan on the west.



Story-telling, songs and dance

The history of the Ngiyampaa Wayilwan people has been kept by story-telling and by song and dance rituals associated with the Creator of the earth, the patterns and cycles of life and nature, and the spirits of the ancestors, known, collectively, as the Dreaming.

Song lines also tell the route from one place to another pointing out the landmarks that can guide you on your way. These features of the landscape thence become sacred to the Indigenous people.

The rhythm of the song line and the dance was kept by clap sticks or often just by knocking boomerangs together. The Wayilwan believed in a Great Creator, an ancestral spirit, which was known as Baiame.

Carve trees and Bora ceremonies

Warren is an area where there were once large numbers of tree carvings. Colonisation has seen the majority of these trees destroyed. They were once seen at the ceremony for initiation of boys (called Bora or Burbong) and once marked the gravesites of important people.

Acknowledgement: Photos from Burial Trees by Lindsay Black, 1941, Robertson and Mullens Limited.



From near Macquarie River, Quambone Road not far from Warren.

BEEMUNNEL HERITAGE TRAIL

Linking the Beemunnel Reserve Aboriginal Place with the Tiger Bay Wetlands and the Window on the Wetlands Centre

In 2016 the NSW Government formally gazetted the Beemunnel Reserve as an 'Aboriginal Place'. Following this declaration, supported by funds from the NSW Aboriginal Lands Council and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, the Warren Macquarie Local Aboriginal Lands Council undertook the work to create the Beemunnel Reserve Heritage Trail with the assistance of RiverSmart Australia and Warren Shire Council. The map showing the extent of the trail can be found on the next pages.



On 23 September 2016 this area was formally gazetted by the NSW Government as the Beemunnel Reserve Aboriginal Place.

Beemunnel Reserve Aboriginal Place

The listing states:

"Beemunnel Reserve is regarded as a highly significant cultural and spiritual site by the local Wayilwan people of the Warren region. It contains tangible evidence of traditional use, including burials and scarred trees, and is linked to the additional significant places on the adjacent blocks, including numerous scarred trees, ovens, burials, ceremonial places, and the location of a group of carved trees which are no longer in place.

The landscape of the Beemunnel Reserve, including Ewenmar (Beemunnel) Creek, the flood free ground beside it and the natural vegetation was used by the Wayilwan people for economic, cultural and ceremonial purposes."

History of the Beemunnel

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries discriminatory policies, attitudes and practices ostracised Aboriginal people from the Warren township. Aboriginal people settled near the banks of the Ewenmar (or Beemunnel) Creek at the site that would become known as the Beemunnel and built a community of their own. The residents of the Beemunnel did not receive government support or services from the Warren Shire. Instead, they cultivated self-sufficient and sustainable lives on the Beemunnel Reserve.

Families were resourceful and constructed their own homes from flattened kerosene tins, bark, and pieces of timber, corrugated metal sheeting and other materials they could access. The men were generally employed to work on stations.

Families at the Beemunnel include: Bullock, Burns, Darcy, Fox, Gall, Gordon, Greenaway, Harris, Lake, Masters, McEwan, Peachey, Pearce, Riley, Smith, Toomey, Trudgett, Whyman, Williams and Wright. Other families that visited and stayed temporarily included: Brandy, Bruce, Cain, Cole, Cooper, Copeland, Cullen, Duncan, Dunn, Fuller, Herring, Holdick, Latham, Luis, Murphy, Potts and Stephen.

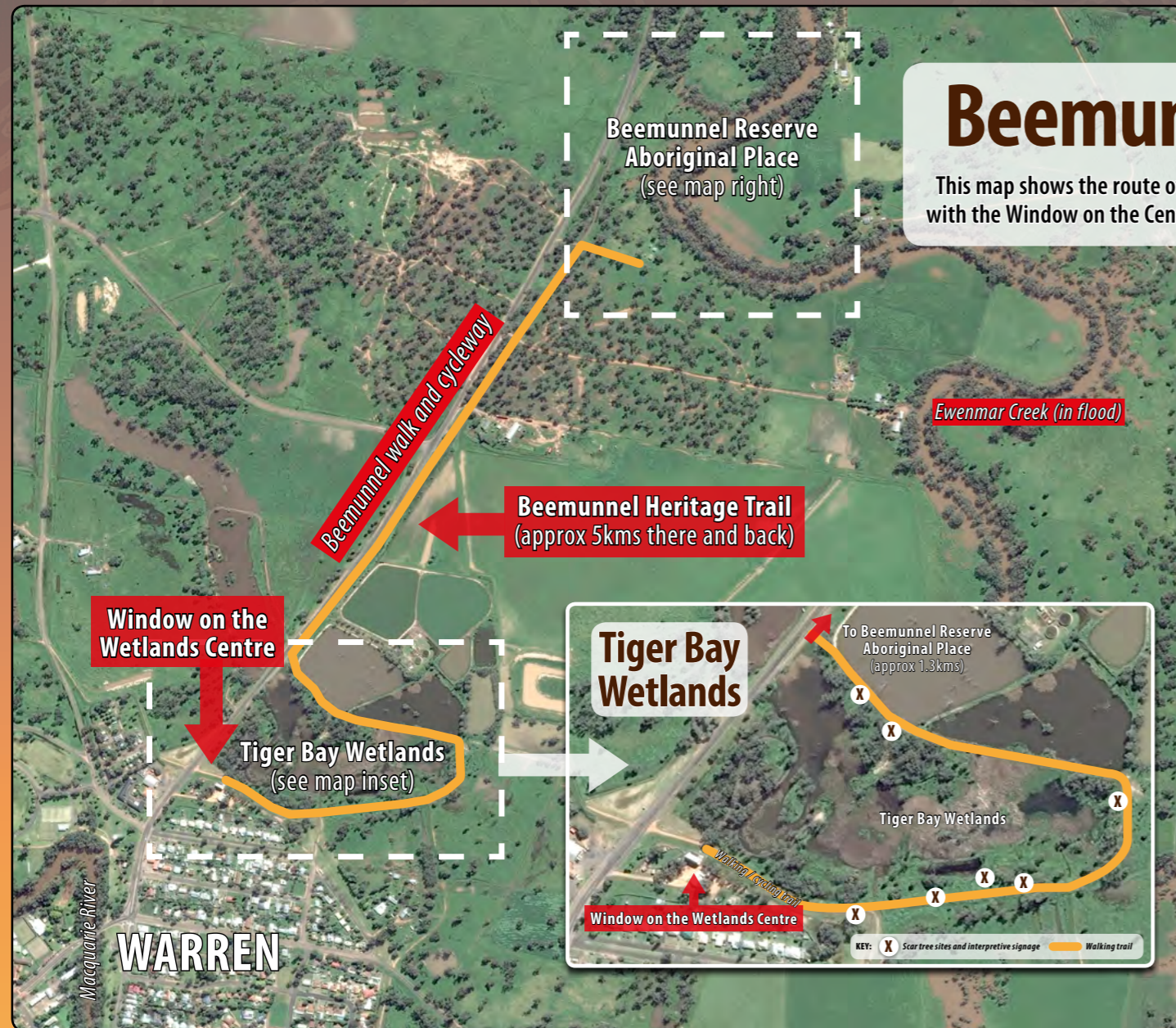
In the 1950's government policy changed from 'protection' to assimilation. In line with this policy shift, attempts were made to move people from the Beemunnel. A special lease was issued to a neighbouring landowner that granted them a portion of the Beemunnel containing at least a dozen homes. A garbage dump was established across the road and a carve tree was cut down. An area containing a bora ground was destroyed when the Council removed soil to use in road works.

As Aboriginal families moved into Warren or elsewhere their homes at the Beemunnel were bulldozed by the Council to prevent people from returning. Gardens and fruit trees were also bulldozed to further deter any return. The last residents left the site in the 1980's after their house was burnt down while they were away.

The Warren Macquarie Local Aboriginal Land Council (Warren LALC) now owns the land known as the Beemunnel Reserve and manages it on behalf of the Aboriginal community.

PROUDLY FUNDED BY THE NSW GOVERNMENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH:





Beemunnel Heritage Trail

This map shows the route of the trail which links the Beemunnel Reserve Aboriginal Place with the Window on the Centre via the walking/cycling trail around the Tiger Bay Wetlands.



Beemunnel Reserve Aboriginal Place

KEY:
 X Sites where former occupant families lived - interpretive signage
 Picnic table BBQ
 Public toilets Walking trail

To Tiger Bay Wetlands and Window on the Wetlands Centre (approx 1.3kms)



Ewenmar Creek. Photo: The Warren Weekly.



George Riley, elder of the Wayilwan community was born and bred at the Beemunnel.

The significance of the Ewenmar Creek

"We've always been on this creek, as far back as I can remember.

I was born and bred here. It had regular flow when we were growing up, it was very seldom dry. That changed when they built the dam [Burrendong] in the 60's. We reared all our children here, me and my wife. She was born here too.

Up to twenty families lived around here and just around the bend my grandmother, uncle and aunt lived. We lived here until the middle 70's. We'd fish and swim and we used to drink it. . . never harmed us. . . we drank it all the time. We'd catch yellowbelly, cod, catfish and bream."

– George Riley