

# LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

This PDF has been created for digital preservation. It may be used for research but is not suitable for other purposes. It may be superseded by a more current version or just be out-of-date and have no relevance to current situations.

005040



# Kattamorda Heritage Trail

CALM LIBRARY ARCHIVE  
NOT FOR LOAN

# W.A. Heritage Trails Network

A Bicentennial Project  
for Community Participation

The Kattamorda Heritage Trail is part of the Heritage Trails Network, a project for community participation devised by the Western Australian Heritage Committee. To commemorate the 1988 Bicentenary, the project established a statewide network of 'Heritage Trails' — routes designed to enhance awareness and enjoyment of Western Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

The Heritage Trails Network was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments under the Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Commemorative Program.

The map below indicates Heritage Trails in the North Metropolitan region of Western Australia.

### North Metropolitan HTs

1. Swan Valley HT	10. John Forrest HT
2. Swan River HT	11. Coondebung's Kalleepgurr HT
3. South Perth HT	12. Walyunga HT
4. Perth HT	13. Railway Reserves HT
5. Four Seasons Trail	14. Bilgoman Well HT
6. Subiaco HT	15. Kattamorda HT
7. Star Swamp HT	
8. Lake Joondalup HT	
9. Yaberoo Budjara HT	



Further Information:  
W.A. Heritage Committee (09) 322 4375

PAM00075

A Commonwealth/State  
Bicentennial Project

# How To Get There

Mundaring is 30km north-east of Perth via Great Eastern Highway (National Highway 94), a drive of approximately half an hour. The trail can also be commenced at Bickley Reservoir, about 20km south-east of Perth on Hardinge Road (via Albany Hwy and Maddington Road).

The **Kattamorda Heritage Trail** is a 27km walk track which starts at Mundaring Weir Road and traverses forests, orchard and farmland along the top of the Darling Range to Carmel, where it descends via Bickley Valley to Bickley Reservoir. It features sites of significance in the history of the timber, forestry, horticultural and tourist industries, the Goldfields Water Scheme, and the area's natural history. The length of the trail provides an interesting and challenging excursion for experienced bushwalkers, while easy vehicle access to several pick-up points along the way allows the trail to be covered in more leisurely short stages.

## Please note:

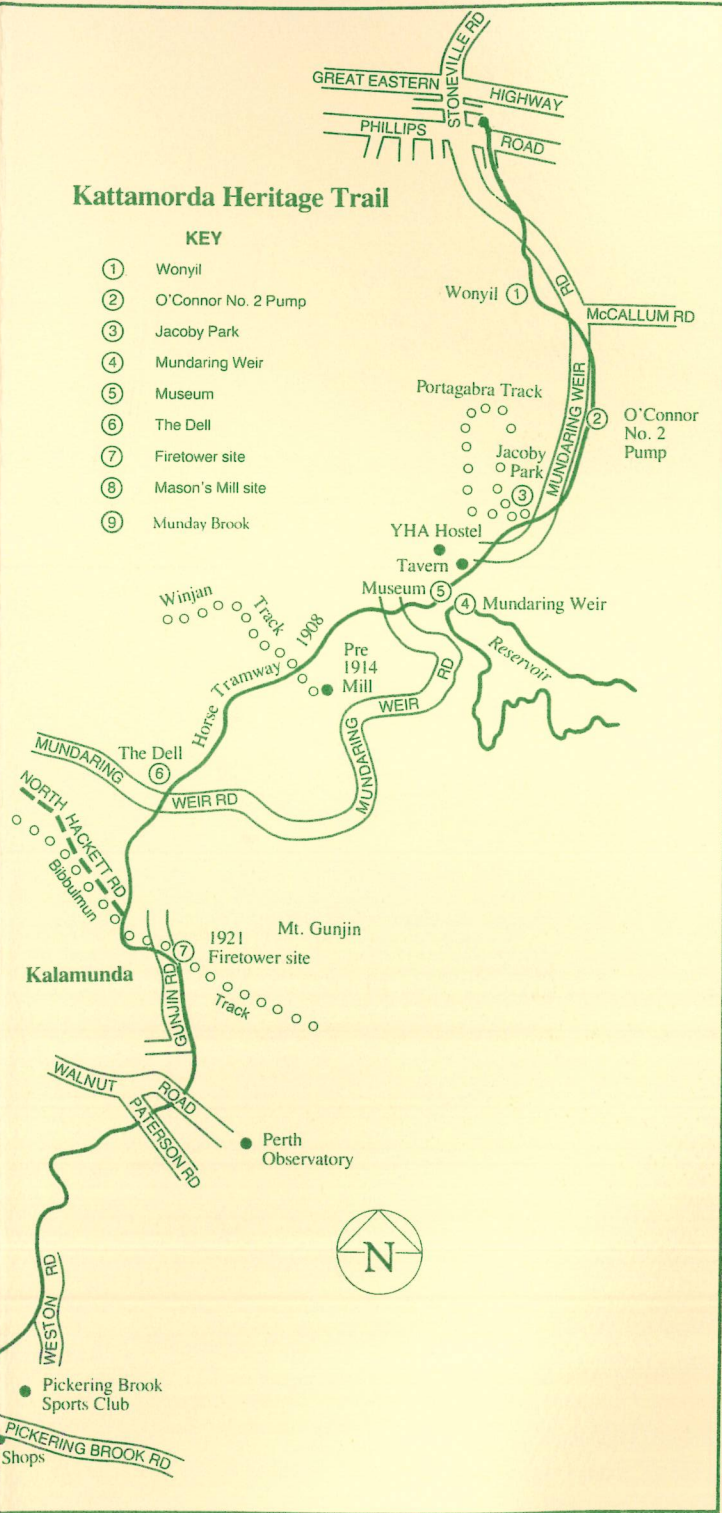
- Refreshments are available at Mundaring, the Weir Tavern and during normal shopping hours at Pickering Brook Store.
- Youth Hostel accommodation can be arranged at Mundaring Weir and Piesse Brook Youth Hostels.
- Persons using this Heritage Trail do so at their own risk.

Front cover: Near the Goldfields Weir Hotel, Mundaring, c.1910 (courtesy Battye Library 5323B/182).

## Kattamorda Heritage Trail

### KEY

- ① Wonyil
- ② O'Connor No. 2 Pump
- ③ Jacoby Park
- ④ Mundaring Weir
- ⑤ Museum
- ⑥ The Dell
- ⑦ Firetower site
- ⑧ Mason's Mill site
- ⑨ Munday Brook



# Introduction

Since the Swan River Colony's foundation in 1829, a steady procession of settlers and entrepreneurs have looked to the Darling Range for their livelihood. In spite of many changes to the environment — streams dammed, trees cut down and valleys and hillsides replanted with fruit trees — the great natural beauty of the ranges remains. Winding through valley and hilltop, this trail retraces a path that echoes with man's endeavours, from Aboriginal traders, tree fellers, orchardists and forest workers to wanderers.

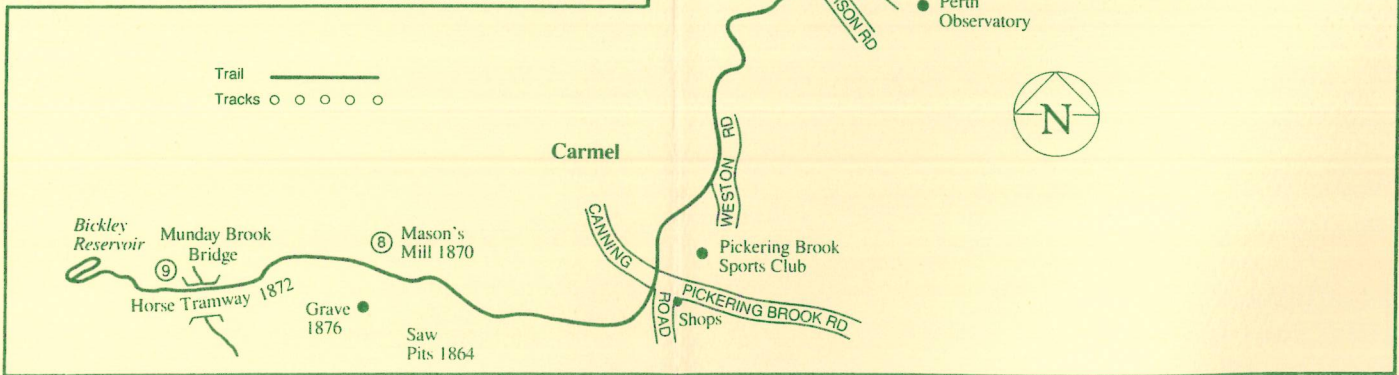
George Fletcher Moore, the Colony's first Advocate General and a keen student of the Swan River Aborigines and their customs, compiled a vocabulary of the local dialect. According to him, the words 'katta' and 'morda' both meant 'hill', and the two words combined was their name for the Darling Range. 'Katta' also meant 'head' or 'top' and therefore Kattamorda very likely meant 'top of the hill' or 'top of the range'.

## 1. Wonyil

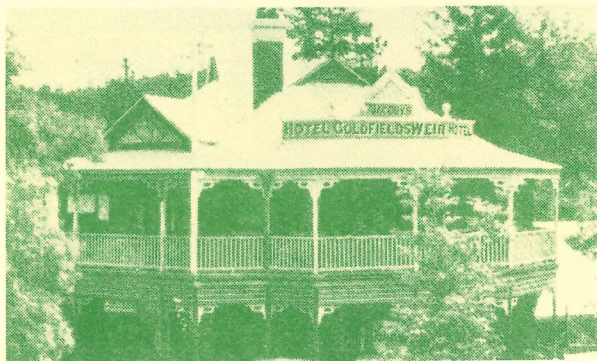
Approximately 3km from Mundaring

This site overlooks the former vineyard of Peter Gugerl, a Perth wine merchant who in 1882 was the first to obtain freehold land in this area. His extensive vineyard and orchard (49 hectares) was called 'St. Bernard'. Today it is Weir Valley Farm.

This was a stop on the former Mundaring Weir railway line from 1898. It was named 'Wonyil', the Aboriginal name for 'shrub', by the W.A. Government Railways Department in 1927. The line ceased to function as a passenger service in the early 1950s.



During the construction phase of the dam and pumping stations, hundreds of men, some with their families, were camped on the site. Ted Jacoby, recognising a great business opportunity, built a hotel on land close to the dam site. Initially its clientele were the thirsty workmen engaged on the project, but Jacoby was astute enough to recognise the Weir's potential as a tourist attraction. He constructed and promoted the Goldfields Weir Hotel which replaced the earlier, single storey Reservoir Hotel, so that after the works were completed and most of his local customers had departed, the hotel became one of Western Australia's most popular tourist hotels. It has been extensively renovated and is now a tavern.



*Goldfields Weir Hotel, c.1920 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring).*

The crowds of sightseers who came up from Perth on excursion trains were delivered to Jacoby's doorstep, at the railway's passenger terminus at Karda Mordo siding right alongside the hotel. Below the Weir wall, remnants of the line can be followed and when the water level in the dam is low, sleepers can be seen upstream of the wall.

According to the W.A. Government Railways, the name of this siding meant, in the Aboriginal language, 'Among the Hills'. Though the railway has long since gone the hotel maintains its popularity with the many thousands of visitors who each year travel to the district by car and by tourist bus.

Even before the Goldfields Water Scheme was thought of, people were attracted to the hills by the magnificent displays of wildflowers, so bountiful in springtime, and by the waterfalls in the many streams that flow through the hills. Hovea Falls in John Forrest National Park, Lesmurdie Falls and Serpentine Falls were the most popular of these and the special Sunday excursion trains — called 'Railway Hikes' — to these and other places were always well patronised.

Today, it is estimated that the number of day visits per year to the Kalamunda-Mundaring hills area is about 2.4 million.



*Train passengers on a railway hike, c.1925 (courtesy Battye Library, B1712).*

## 5. No. 1 Pumping Station — O'Connor Museum

*Opening times:*

*Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri: 10.30am-3pm*

*Sat: 1-4pm, Sun: 12-5pm*

*Group tours available — phone Pam Miller on 295 1393*

After the conversion from steam to electric pumps in 1954 No. 1 Pumping Station became the O'Connor Museum. The museum features the original steam boilers, giant steam powered pumps, and a pictorial history of the Goldfields Water Supply. An information shelter on the north end of the wall tells the story of the wall's construction, additions to it, and the extension of the scheme to agricultural areas.



*Forest regrowth after extensive ringbarking, c.1920 (courtesy Batty Library, BH375/1 K1581585).*

The Forests Act of 1918, followed by the founding of the Forests Department, afforded the forests proper legal protection. Initially the new Department was very small and most of its activities were centred around Mundaring. Here, where the Department's first fire lookout towers were erected, its single slack-wire bush telephone line connected the towers with each other and the District Office in Mundaring. A road, the first of many thousands of miles of forest roads in W.A., was constructed around the reservoir to provide access to firewood for the pumping stations. Pine plantations were established on resumed farmlands in the catchment area.

In these early years the forest workers' only means of transport to their place of work was on horseback or in horse-drawn spring-carts. During the fire season they communicated with tower men on Mount Dale and Mount Gungin towers by heliograph. When advised of a fire they rode to it, and on arrival used a tomahawk, with which each man was equipped, to cut a sapling handle for the fire-rake head, the other half of each man's fire fighting equipment. They then set to work raking a break around the fire, making use wherever possible of logging tracks and brumby and kangaroo pads to make their task easier, and controlled the fire by back burning.



*Jarrah giants before being felled, c.1890 (courtesy Batty Library, BA375/1 K126843).*

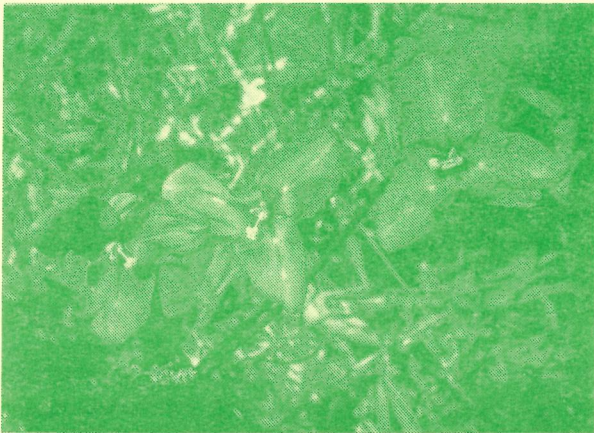
Today, fire detection is done from light aircraft flying regular patrols over the forest, and the heliograph and bush telephone have been superseded by two-way radio. Gangs travel to work in powerful four-wheel-drive fire trucks equipped with 3,000 litre water tanks and powerful pumps, chemical fire retardants, and chainsaws, while if necessary, firebreaks are constructed by bulldozers or wheel blade tractors. The aims of forest management have also changed since the 1920s. The emphasis has shifted from timber production to water production. Water catchment management, forest recreation and conservation are the priorities for management in this district now. The Forests Department, National Parks Authority and Wildlife Authority were amalgamated in 1985 to form the new Department of Conservation and Land Management. This Department is now responsible for the management of all State Forests, National Parks and Nature Reserves in Western Australia.

## Bibbulmun Track

Close to the 1921 fire tower site at Mount Gungin, the trail crosses the Bibbulmun Track. This is a 650km long distance walktrail from Kalamunda to Walpole on the south coast. 'Bibbulmun' has been used collectively to describe the Aboriginal tribes who roamed parts of the South West. They often travelled long distances for tribal meetings and corroborees.

## Natural History

The Darling Range is renowned for its number of unique species of plants. Apart from the tall Jarrah and Marri, there is an understorey of smaller trees and dense thickets of shrubs, ground plants and climbers. There are banksias with large, brightly coloured flower spikes and grotesque cones, and the unusual Xanthorrhoea and Kingia. Early settlers thought these resembled Aborigines and called the Xanthorrhoea, with its long spear-like flowering spikes and bush head 'blackboys'. The more slender Kingia, which does not have 'spears', they called 'blackgins'.



Purple Flags (*Patersonia occidentalis*) flower for one day only, between September and November (courtesy Betty Ball).

Many of the wildflowers growing in the hills have common names that stem from their resemblance to birds, animals and insects such as Kangaroo Paws and the many small orchids called Donkey, Spider, Duck, Cat, Mosquito, Snail, Bird, Rabbit, Helmet and Jug

Orchids. There are the brightly coloured Acacias, Hoveas, Petrophiles, Hakeas, Hibbertias and the lovely Sky-blue Leschenaultia, to mention just a few of the abundance of wildflowers. They are particularly prolific in the first few years following a bushfire. Since most of the plants of the Darling Range evolved in a fire-prone environment, they are dependent on periodic fires to trigger regeneration mechanisms.

Among the most brightly coloured flowers are the Gastrolobiums and Oxylobiums, most of which are toxic, some fatal to introduced animals. The best known of these, *Gastrolobium calycinum*, which grows prolifically in the Darling Range, was named 'York Road Poison' by the early settlers because of the heavy stock losses it caused in herds and flocks being taken over the hills to the new farming areas in the Avon Valley.



One of the native peas (*Bossiaea pulchella*) (courtesy Betty Ball).

The Grey Kangaroo is common and likely to be seen along the trail. The brush-tailed Black-Gloved Wallaby, commonly known as brush, is less numerous. Most of the smaller mammals are nocturnal and therefore are less frequently seen. These include the Brush-tailed Possum (Aboriginal name Kumal), Ringtail Possum (Kulan), Honey Possum (Noolbenger), Pigmy Possum

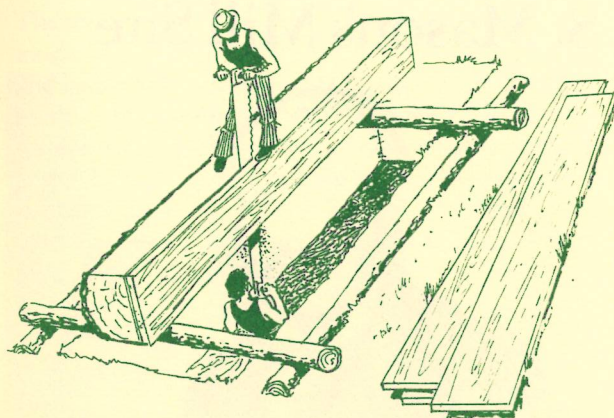
Many of the orchards in the hills were established by Italian migrants, who took up and cleared and developed small properties on a part time basis. They earned a living sleeper-cutting, charcoal burning or working in the sawmills nearby until their fruit trees came into production. The descendants of these pioneers have reaped the benefit of their forefathers' hard work and perseverance. On many of these orchards you will notice two homes: the original humble weatherboard homestead and the modern brick and tiled house often with a swimming pool, that became affordable as the result of the industry of these migrant families and their descendants.

### The Timber Industry

Early colonists recognised the potential wealth of the magnificent primeval jarrah forest in the Darling Range and if this resource could have been exploited in the first decades of settlement, the struggling colony's financial problems might easily have been remedied. However, lack of capital and skilled labour and difficulties in transporting timber from the hills to the coast frustrated all early attempts to establish a viable export timber industry. It was not until venture capital from outside the colony was invested in the local timber industry and steam locomotives introduced that this transport problem was overcome and a regular export industry established. Prior attempts to haul timber from the forest to the coast by means of horse-drawn tramways met with only moderate success.

The new timber developments were centred initially at Wonnerup, Jarrahdale and Karridale, where timber companies established railway lines between their mills and their own port facilities at Wonnerup, Mandurah, Hamelin Bay and Flinders Bay — all well south of the 'Kattamorda' area.

Pit sawyers and shingle-splitters, however, had been active in the Darling Range near Perth since as early as 1843. This activity increased rapidly after 1850 with the introduction of convict labour and an infusion of capital by the Imperial Government into a Public Works programme of buildings, roads and bridges which improved communications and created a bigger local market.



*Pit sawyers at work (courtesy Department of Conservation and Land Management).*

For the next 30 or 40 years, gangs of sawyers, splitters and hewers worked the forests in the hills. Most of them were convicts and ticket-of-leave men employed by contractors who supplied the Perth market. Convict labour had improved the roads, and river boats plying between Guildford, Perth and Fremantle to some extent overcame the transport difficulties. The extension of the Government Railway from Guildford to Chidlow Well in 1884 was the beginning of the end of this era. In the next few years several steam-powered sawmills were established along the line to cut sleepers and other railway timber. The railway was extended first to York, then, following the gold discoveries, to Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie and beyond; by 1900 pit-sawing had given way to more modern methods.

Along the trail, sawpits dug in the era and the stumps of trees sawn over them, are still to be seen. Some of these stumps are 120 years old or more. Some are relics of Benjamin Mason's Timber Station, dating back to 1864.

## 8. Mason's Mill Site



*Timber entrepreneur Benjamin Mason, c.1852 (courtesy Battye Library, 5809B/2).*

In 1864 Benjamin Mason established the first sawmill in the Darling Range. This was the Colony's second viable mill. Mason had established a timber station on the banks of the Canning River in the early 1860s and in 1864 he was granted a licence to cut timber on one square mile (2.59 sq km) in the hills at the head of Bickley Brook, where the trees were much bigger and more abundant than along the Canning River. He established another timber station here and employed over 100 men, mostly ex-convicts, as pit sawyers, teamsters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths and cooks.

The timber was hauled by horse teams over a very rough, steep track down the range and across the sandy and boggy coastal plain to 'Masons Landing' on the banks of the Canning River. From there it was transported in flat-bottomed boats over the mud banks of the shallow river to the Swan River and either over the bar to ships anchored in Gage Roads or taken upriver to Perth. These transport difficulties made it difficult for him to supply buyers' orders.

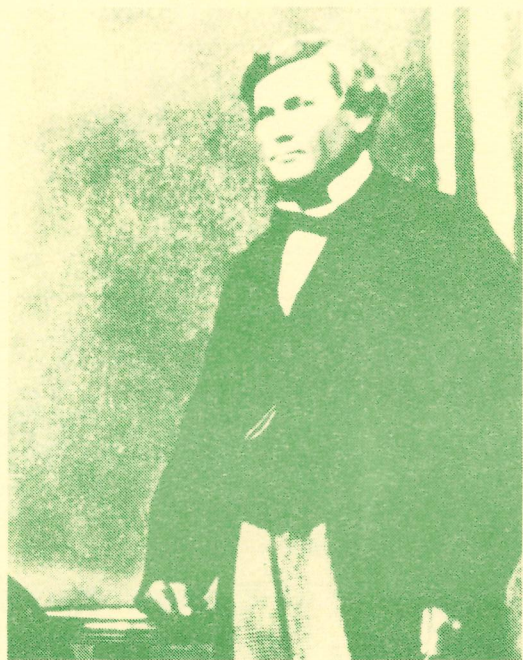


*Stacked timber waiting to be shipped, c.1880 (courtesy Battye Library, 1458 B24A).*

In an endeavour to overcome this problem he installed steam sawmills at both timber stations in 1869. The biggest saw was only a little over one metre in diameter and could cut through only about 40cm, so the big logs still had to be broken down into workable sizes by the pit sawyers. However, the mills speeded up production and put even more pressure on Mason's transport system. An account of a visit to Mason's Mills published in the **Inquirer** in September 1869 illustrated this:

*Besides large piles of railway sleepers near the bank of the river ready for the shipment, there are more than 1,000 tons of large squared logs of jarrah, from 30 feet to 50 feet long and several hundred loads of sawn timber of various dimensions lying about the station.*

In 1870 Mason entered into a partnership with Francis Bird, a young architect who had access to capital in England and put some £25,000 into the business. The following year the partners were granted a 14-year lease over 40,500 hectares of forest on condition that they constructed a tramway from the Canning River to their mill at Carmel.



Francis Bird (courtesy Battye Library, 5809/2).

The wooden railed horse-drawn tramway, thought to have been designed by Bird, was completed in 1872 and continued in use until 1882. Trolleys loaded with sawn timber or logs were allowed to free-wheel where possible but were otherwise pulled by horses. Derailments were common, and there were some bad accidents. In one, eight horses were killed. The line was never very successful and eventually Mason and Bird became bankrupt and the mill and tramway closed down.

*The Mason & Bird Heritage Trail retraces the route of this tramway, one of the earliest in Western Australia. Trail brochures are available from the City of Gosnells Historical Society.*

## 9. Munday Brook

About 1.5km from Bickley Reservoir the trail crosses a stream coming in from the south-east to join Bickley Brook just below. This is Munday Brook, named after the area's Aboriginal guardian. According to early writers, Munday was one of the leaders of the Perth Aborigines and was the traditional owner of 'Beeloo' — the land between the Canning and Helena Rivers extending back into the hills. At one time he and two other leaders — Yagan and Midgegoroo, traditional owners of adjacent lands — were outlawed and a price put on their heads for the ambush and murder of two Europeans. Midgegoroo was captured and shot without trial in Perth gaol; Yagan was later treacherously shot by two young Europeans. Munday was pardoned.

Some of the Aboriginal names for places and things are still in use and include Jarrah, Marri, Yarri, Wandoo, Mundaring, Boya, Kalamunda and Gungin.

Continue onto Bickley Reservoir where the trail finishes.

For those further interested in historic and scenic hills trails:

1. *The John Forrest Heritage Trail retraces the abandoned railway line through Jane Brook Valley in John Forrest National Park. It is a 10.2km walk featuring historical, geological and scenic attractions and takes a leisurely half day to complete.*
2. *The Railway Reserves Heritage Trail retraces 70km of the old Eastern Railway constructed from Fremantle to York in the 1880s. Suitable for walking, cycling and horseriding, it rediscovers the individual history and character of many settlements which sprang up along the line.*
3. *The Cala Munnda Heritage Trail retraces the early settlement of Kalamunda and has two sections: a 42km driving circuit with opportunities for picnicking, and a children's signposted walk around the Kalamunda townsite.*

# Acknowledgements

The **Kattamorda Heritage Trail** was developed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Mundaring, which acknowledges the assistance of:

- Commonwealth Employment Programme
- Westrek
- Aboriginal Employment Scheme
- Kalamunda Historical Society
- Water Authority of Western Australia

# Photographs

Photographs in this brochure are courtesy of:

- Battye Library
- Department of Conservation and Land Management
- Shire of Mundaring
- Betty Ball
- Phyllis Seaman



*Picnickers in the hills, c.1895 (courtesy Battye Library, 5323B/1842).*

# Further Reading

- Elliot, Ian    **Mundaring: A History of the Shire**  
(Shire of Mundaring, 1983)
- Slee, John    **Cala Munnda: A Home in the Forest**  
(Shire of Kalamunda, 1979)
- Hickson,  
David &  
Slee, John    **The Mason and Bird Timber  
Company 1862-1882**  
(Canning Districts Historical Society,  
1978)

NOTES

NOTES