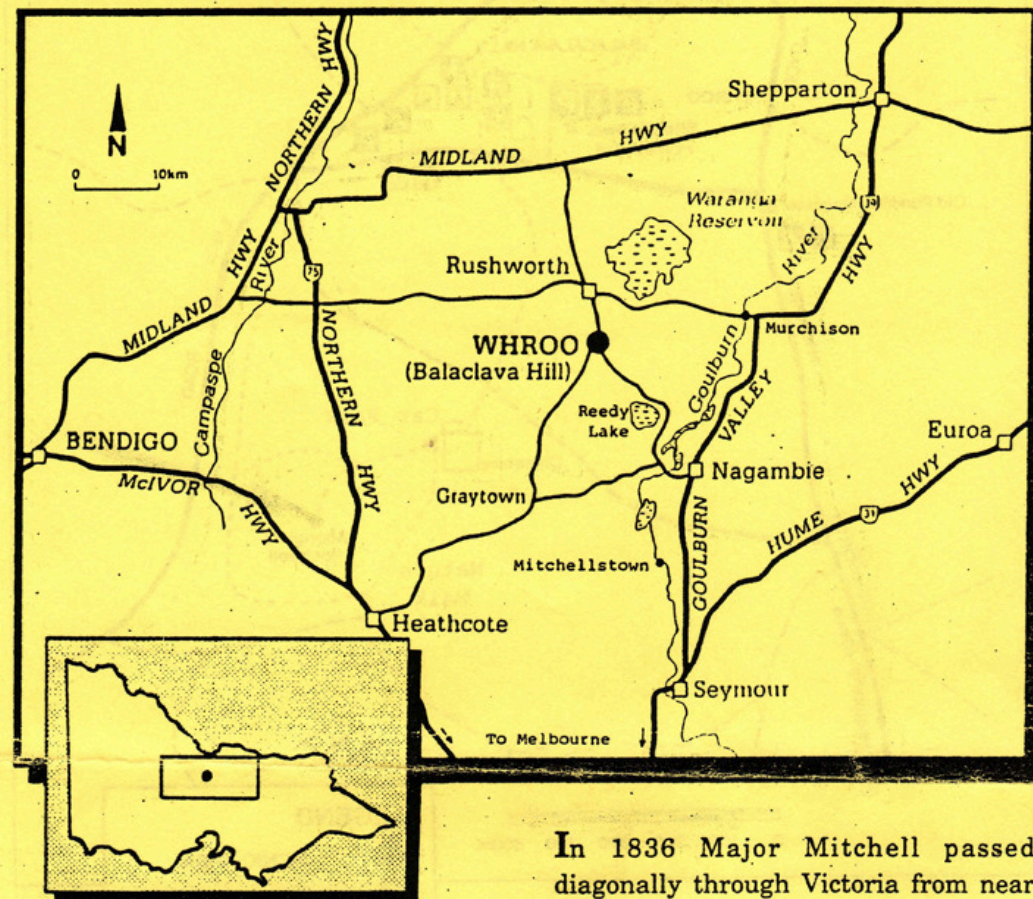


ROCK WELL AT WHROO

EDITED ABSTRACTS FROM A REPORT
BY R.G. GUNN



of the rock well. Mitchell was closely followed by the first settlers, and so began a series of resistance wars by local Aborigines.

By 1845, following numerous "reprisal raids" by the settlers and the police, there were only 302 survivors of nine Taungurong and Ngurai-illum-wurrung clans. Their traditional life-style, food resources and effective resistance were destroyed.

By 1850 the area was extensively settled by pastoralists and, with the discovery of gold in 1853, the township of Whroo was established. At its peak the town had a population of over 1000, but following the winding down of mining operations in the 1890s the town went into rapid decline. The last occupants left the town around 1960.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ROCK WELL

The rock well is some 90 cm deep, 50x35 cm diameter and has a capacity of about 110 litres or 24 gallons. The opposite walls are essentially parallel, but the floor (45 cm) dips steeply from west to east (to c90 cm). The rear wall extends some 50 cm above the front wall and, when full, water flows over the lip of the front wall.

In 1836 Major Mitchell passed diagonally through Victoria from near Albury to Portland, crossing the Goulburn River at what was later to be called Mitchellstown, some 20 km south



This well-visited Aboriginal rock well lies within the Whroo Historic Reserve, in north-central Victoria. The Reserve, managed by the Department of Conservation and Environment (DCE), was established to preserve and interpret features of the historic Whroo township and its associated gold mining fields.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Whroo was central to the lands of the Ngurai-illum-wurrung people who, in common with Aboriginal people throughout south-eastern Australia, were dispossessed and all but exterminated by the violent aggression of the first pastoralists.

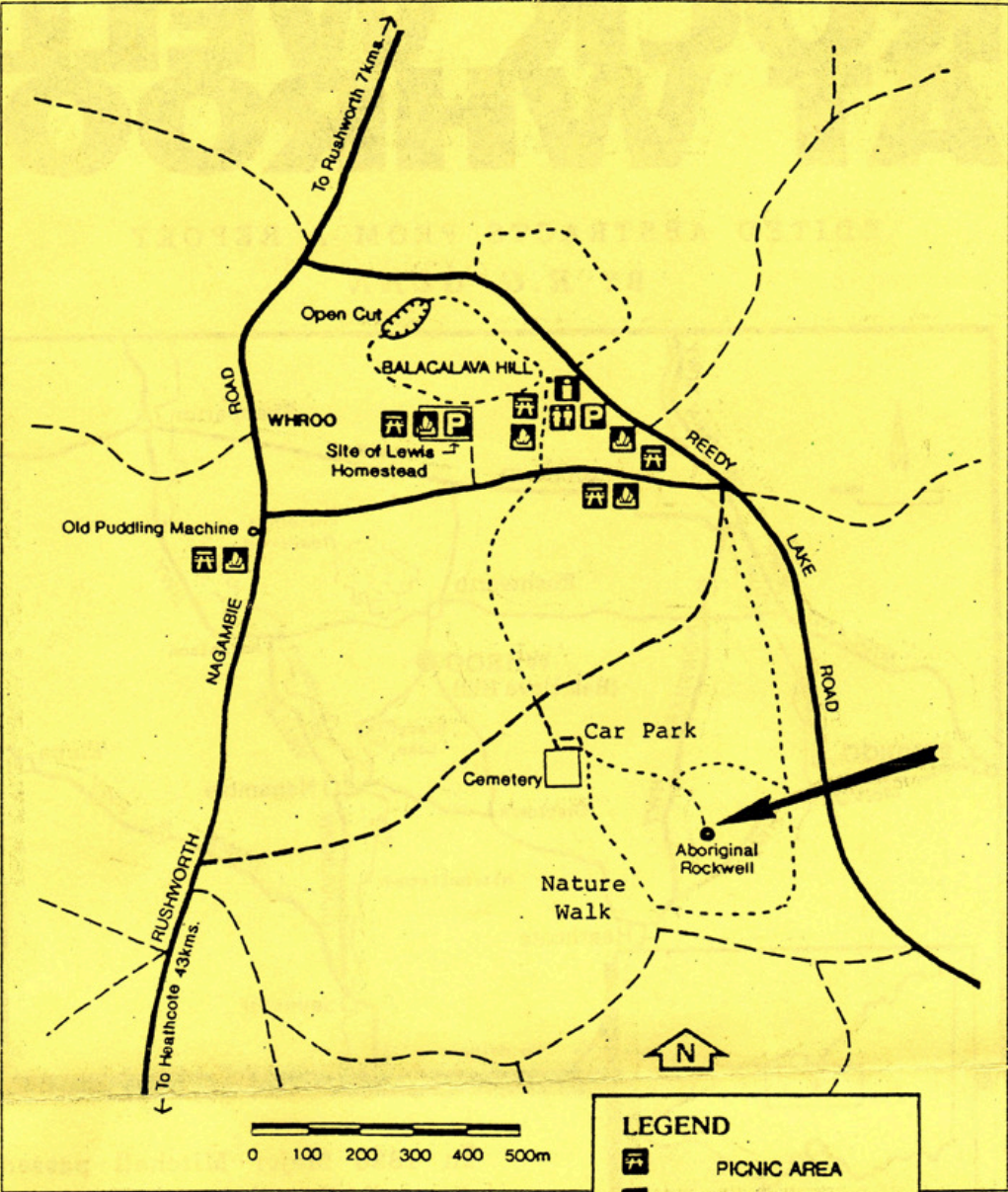
The name Whroo, Wahroo or Wooro is said to be an Aboriginal word for lips or mouth. As it would be impossible to drink with the lips from this hole when the water was low, the hole suggests a mouth, hence the name Wooro.

In a recent study of rock wells in New South Wales, it was found that most rock wells are closely associated with Rainbow (Snake) mythology and rain making ceremonies. Today, Aborigines in the area still refer to the rockwell as a "sacred Aboriginal place."

One Aboriginal family used the area in the late 1940s to escape the Welfare Department who wanted to take their children and place them in institutions.

Local Aborigines continue to maintain an association with the rock well at Whroo. Although it is of traditional and contemporary significance, they have given their permission for the site to be developed to help promote awareness of local Aboriginal culture. **S**

A report on the Rock well at Whroo, with recommendations for its management was prepared by R.G. Gunn in 1990.



Produced by the Victoria Archaeological Survey PO Box 262 Albert Park VIC 3206 (03) 690 5322

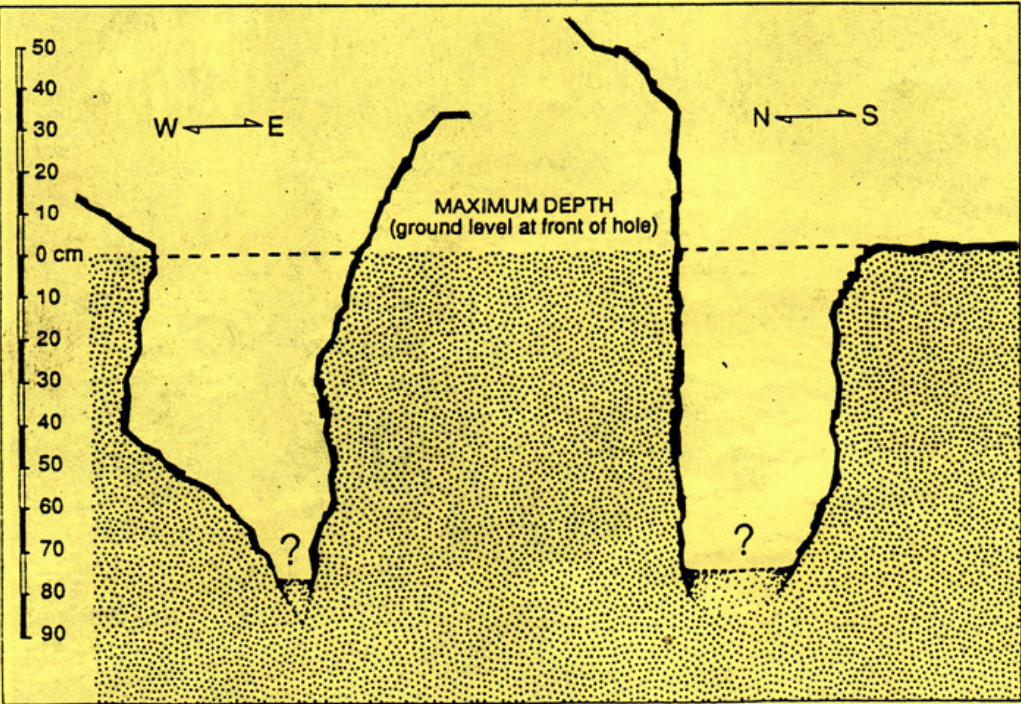


Illustration: Kon Herislandis

| LEGEND | |
|--------|--------------------|
| | PICNIC AREA |
| | FIREPLACE |
| | TOILETS (Disabled) |
| | PARKING AREA |
| | INFORMATION |
| | MAIN ROAD |
| | UNSEALED ROAD |
| | WALKING TRACK |

Far left: The rock well and surrounds from the east showing the extent and erosion of the pathway leading down to the site. The barriers on top of the rise mark the perimeter of the old picnic ground.

Left: Profiles of the rock well.

Above: Location of the rock well and other tourist features and facilities (from DCE map).