

# Manjimup Heritage Park

## Education Resource

A look through time:  
history of the  
Shire of Manjimup



SHIRE OF  
**MANJIMUP**

# Aboriginal Life

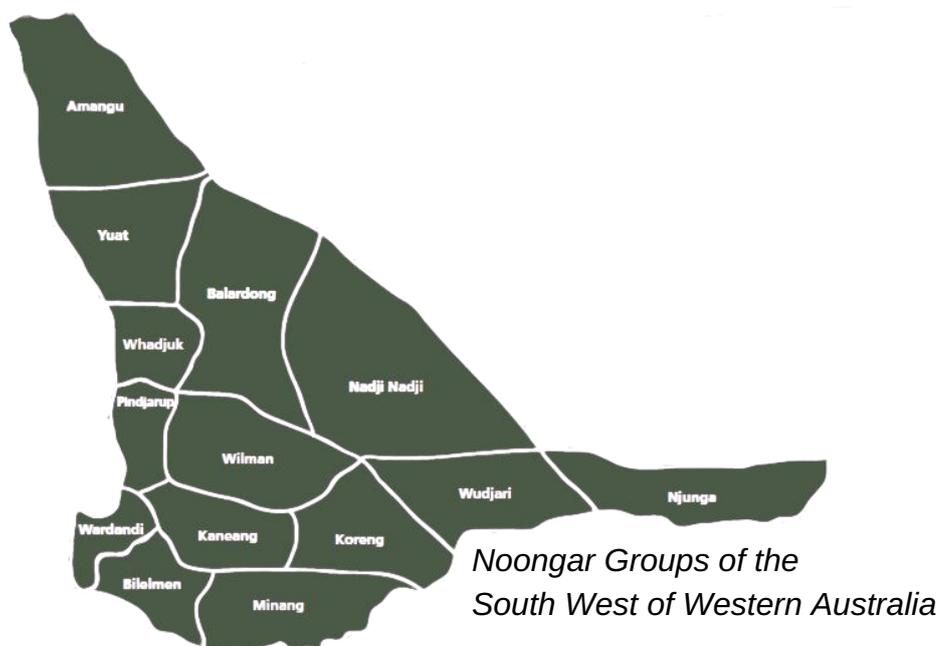
Shire of Manjimup sits on the traditional lands of the Noongar Waradandi and Bibulmun/Piblemen people, who have lived in the region for at least 40,000 years before the first European contact.

There are numerous Aboriginal archaeological sites in the area. These places include remains of discarded objects and piles of debris at former rock tool making sites. Closer to the coast, you can find edible shell scatters, which serve as evidence of ancient campsites.

Nyungar people traditionally lived in tightly knit family groups. They had a close relationship with the land and their identity was linked to the places to which they were connected. The different groups adhered to tribal territories, boundaries and sacred places. People had certain responsibilities for looking after the land. These responsibilities, as well as the right to the land, were inherited.

The Noongar culture and traditions were passed down to the younger generations through dance, story and song.

European people had different attitudes to land ownership. Arrival of white settlers had a devastating effect upon the traditional way of life of Noongar people and saw them lose control and often connection with their ancestral homelands.



# Early Colonial Settlement

(1829 - 1885)

The area around Manjimup was first visited by European people in the early 1830s, although it stayed largely unexplored by them for about twenty years. In 1852, the first official government survey of the district took place. In the same year, two brothers, Thomas and John Muir, came to explore the area and in 1856 they became the first white settlers in the district.

Other early settlers included:

- Charles Rose at Wilgarrup, 1857;
- Frank Hall at Manjimup Brook, 1858;
- Thomas Scott at Donnelly River, 1861;
- Edward Revely Brockman on the banks of the
- Warren, 1861.

By the 1870s there were at least a dozen major homesteads in the region. These early settlers arrived along old bush tracks, on carts pulled by oxen. Some convict labour was called in in the 1860s to construct

bridges over the Blackwood, Donnelly and Warren Rivers. These passages, as well as early stock routes between the coast and inland areas, formed the start of the road network that exists today.

Most settlers at the time were largely self-sufficient, growing wheat and vegetables as well as running horses, cattle and sheep. The earliest exports from the region included beef, horses, dairy produce, and kangaroo skins. Soon, these were overtaken by the felling of timber.



*The Ballarat at Lockeville in 1871  
Courtesy Rail Heritage WA*



For more detailed information about Manjimup's heritage, see the Shire of Manjimup Municipal Heritage Inventory visit [www.manjimup.wa.gov.au](http://www.manjimup.wa.gov.au)

# Gold Rush Era

(1885 - 1914)

When gold was discovered in the Kimberley, and later in Kalgoorlie, it resulted in a big increase in settlement of the south west. The gold rushes led to a growth in population and wealth of the state, and this in turn contributed to a boom in construction and improvements to WA's transport system. Building of railroads – in particular, the start of the Trans Australian Railway Line – increased the demand for hardwood. As many more people were needed in the timber industry, workers moved to the south west. The government encouraged settlement in the area and offered special land grants. Mixed farming and fruit growing continued to be very important at this time, however.

In 1907, a tree ringbarking scheme commenced in an area to the north west of the town site of Manjimup. This scheme started as an idea for closed settlement of farms and provided work for the unemployed, who were experienced in using axes. Manjimup was officially listed as a town in 1910, and begun to develop as a key service centre in the region. The first building in town, also built in 1910, was the Manjimup Trading Co on the corner of Giblett and Brockman Streets. Other early buildings included the Manjimup Hotel in 1912 and the Workers Hall in 1913. The South West Railway reached Manjimup in 1911, and connected with other rail networks. The railways made it easier to haul logs to mills and then the send the finished timber to ports for export or use.

During this period, settlers in the region engaged in various types of farming from cattle and sheep to mixed farming. There was also extensive employment in the timber industry, both in the new State Saw Mills, established in 1912. Fruit also became an important crop in the area.



*Loading logs at Denmark c1900  
Courtesy Museum Victoria MM5803*



# The War Years

## (1914 - 1945)

The end of World War 1 brought the introduction of new ideas and technology to Manjimup. The period saw the arrival of motor vehicles and the increased availability of services such as electricity, telephone and radio. These technologies changed the way people worked and lived. There were several government promoted 'assisted settlement' schemes during this period. The most significant of these was the Group Settlement Scheme, which started in 1921 and which was set up to encourage more people to settle in the south-west, start farming, and reduce the State's dependency on food imports. It was also a way of assisting 'mother Britain' by providing British people to make a living in the years after World War 1.

Despite the large numbers of settlers involved, the Group Settlement Scheme was not suited to everyone. The settlers were mostly inexperienced in agriculture and ill equipped for the hardships of first clearing, and then cultivating, the forest region. By the 1930s, large numbers of them had abandoned their bush blocks and moved to the city.

During the Great Depression, world prices for primary (agricultural) produce collapsed. Timber prices also plummeted and demand for timber declined rapidly. A number of mills were forced to close, and many struggling settlers were forced off their land. Those that survived this period did so by diversifying their farms or businesses (eg. growing several different types of crops).

Another significant event was the start of migration from Italy and southern Europe which significantly increases with the migration of displaced persons post WW2. These migrants tended to be more successful and expanded on many new fledgling industries including tobacco, which had been introduced by group settlers earlier. They often took up land abandoned by the group settlers and established successful farms. There were a wide

variety of occupations in the region during this period. These included mill work, forestry, road and railway construction, grazing, mixed farming including pig and poultry farming, and fruit growing. A thriving dairying industry emerged in Manjimup, which included both butter and cheese factories.



*Fred and Bertha Newton at first radio repair shop c1940s.*

*Courtesy Rod Newton.*



# Post War Optimism

**(1946 - 1974)**

World War 2 was followed by a period of prosperity and further government assisted migration programs from Britain and Europe. Some of the migrants arrived in the south west as displaced persons, who were unable to return to their original homes in Europe after the war. They were allocated work and accommodation under government schemes in the Manjimup district.

In 1945 the War Service Land Settlement Scheme was established to allow the resettlement of ex-servicemen displaced by war. Settlers in some cases took up farms abandoned by the earlier group settlers. Dairying was the main industry that employed the new settlers.

Tobacco farming had grown to about 60 growers in the Manjimup district, however this came to an end in 1961. The plantation land were sold mainly for horticulture.

In the 1950s dairying was the main industry in the area, although fruit and vegetable production were also important and many new orchards sprung up. In the 1960s potatoes became an important industry, often grown together with a small dairy or cattle herd or orchard. Forestry, mill work, mixed farming and honey production (associated with the karri) also kept people employed.

New arrivals to the district joined an established community with a strong sense of identity. Many of the newcomers came from a range of different cultural backgrounds with over 53 different ethnic groups migrating to the area. Over time, this cultural diversity enriched the community with the introduction of new skills, sporting and cultural activities.



*Deanmill Hockey Team 1956.*

*Courtesy Carol Samsa.*



# Resilience, diversity and challenges

(1974 - )

Over the last 50 years, further settlement in the Shire of Manjimup was led by the growth of the tourism industry and by those seeking a rural lifestyle as an alternative to city life. However, at the same time, there was a decline in some traditional industries. In the timber industry, there were changes in the number and ownership of the operating mills. The mills that opened in the post-war and earlier closed down. This meant that most of the mill workers left the district, although some took up farming in the area. Some of the mill towns were purchased privately and used for tourist and recreational purposes.

Dairying, once wide spread in the area is now concentrated in a few large herds mainly in the Northcliffe area. Fruit growing has remained an important industry, as has mixed farming. The region's temperate climate is ideal for growing diverse produce, which includes – but is not limited to - cauliflowers, potatoes, onions, cherries and strawberries. Agricultural innovation is very evident in the area. For example, Manjimup has become 'Home of the Pink Lady Apple and Bravo Apple' while Pemberton is well known for its avocado production, with one of the biggest crops in Western Australia. Further diversity in farming has come with the growth of the wine industry and an increase in the number of marron farms. The region has a growing reputation for agricultural tourism, with annual events such as the 'Truffle Kerffufle'.



*Log Chop Competitions  
Manjimup Cherry Harmony Festival.  
Courtesy Frances Andrijich.*

Tourism has created employment and is one of the industries leading the way to economic growth in the district. Places such as the RAC Karri Valley Resort (based on an old hops farm), Walpole Wilderness (WOW) tours, Watermark Kilns (based in old tobacco kilns) and Dingup House (a bed and breakfast in one of the early settler homes) are just a few of the tourist businesses that have developed around heritage places in the Shire. Visitors are drawn to the area by a large number of accommodation options and many cultural and natural attractions, such as the Bridle and Munda Biddi Trails and the Bibbulmun Track, which winds its way through the Shire on Manjimup on its way to Albany.

