



maitland

city council

DISCOVER WALKA!

FIRST PEOPLES

LIVING AROUND WALKA

The Walka story is not one of untouched wilderness. It is the story of the presence of people in the landscape. Walka is part of the Wonnarua people's traditional lands.

A Dreamtime story from the Wonnarua explains how hills and rivers were created by a spirit called Baiame. Baiame created the earth and sent other spirits to create and live in the natural features of the Hunter Valley. For thousands of years before European settlers came to the Hunter, there was no reservoir at Walka, only a small natural lagoon which would have been an important resource for Indigenous people.

Places such as the lagoon, provided fish, shellfish and plants which were both edible and useful in the manufacture of equipment. Aboriginal communities lived sustainably with the environment and landscape moving from area to area with the seasons and when particular foods were available.

Lagoons also attracted waterbirds, as does the reservoir today.

A description dating to 1827 paints a vivid picture of the lagoons in the Maitland- Wallis Plains area:

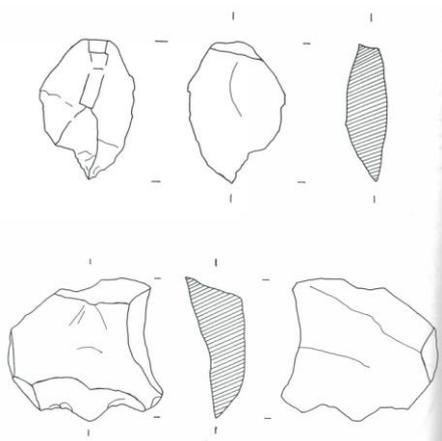
'The country back from the river consists of rising hills of inferior soils, with fertile flooded vine brushes, watered by lagoons communicating with the river. These lagoons swarm with the most delicious fish; and during the dry summers, when the water is low, the natives wade in and actually drag out cartloads thereof, including immense eels.'

ANCIENT PLACES

There are important places at Walka which show how Indigenous people used the lagoon and its surrounds.

Stone artefacts have been found by archaeologists which have been made from the local mudstone bedrock.

An axe grinding groove on a rock surface has also been found. It is deep enough to hold water after rain. Axe grinding grooves are created by the manufacture of stone tools with sharp edges. Water is essential for the grinding process, and grooves might be used for things such as grinding seeds.



Drawings of stone artefacts found at Walka

There are many other rare and special places around Maitland. Open campsites usually occur along the banks of creeks or on higher ground next to watercourses. Remains such as stone artefacts and sometimes camp fireplaces show where campsites were located. They might be found in cleared areas free of vegetation, where there has been erosion, or the ground has been disturbed or ploughed.

Scarred trees result from the removal of bark for the production of items such as shields, water containers, canoes and perhaps roofing for shelters. In the Maitland area where European occupation was well established by the 1830's and because there has been a great deal of clearing, trees old enough to show scars are now rare.

Quarries, where there are outcrops of bedrock, were used by Aboriginal people as raw materials for the manufacture of stone artefacts.