



Produced by Department of Sustainability and Environment

THE ORIGINAL SITE

The creation of Lake Mokoan as a water supply impoundment, involved the flooding of a series of natural swamps, consisting of two main water bodies, Winton and Green Swamps and several smaller swamps: Ashmeads; Humphries; Saddlers; Taminick; Black and Lindsays. Like most wetlands, these swamps would have been highly productive and important resources for human inhabitants. In addition to being a reasonably reliable source of water, food in the form of eggs, birds, fish and shellfish would have been plentiful as well as important food plants and materials for tools and shelters.

The remains of a lunette, a crescent shaped formation created by deposits of fine sediment moved by wind, now referred to as the Spit, would have been a focal point for both Indigenous and European use of the area.

A key aspect of the Mokoan – Return to Wetlands Project will be to rehabilitate the wetland system that is presently inundated within Lake Mokoan.

Above: Scar Tree

Below Left: Broken Rhyolite axehead

Centre: Winton wetlands by Helen Aston

Right: Mortar and Pestle



INDIGENOUS USE

The high incidence and range of heritage sites identified during archaeological surveys of the area have indicated that the area of Lake Mokoan would have been intensively occupied by Aboriginal people.

This is to be expected as food, water, shelter and medicines would all have been supplied from the swamps, surrounding land and nearby hills. The area would have been an important resource to all local groups. Several scar trees that are visible today indicate that Indigenous people removed bark to make canoes, containers and possibly shields and shelters.

A range of stone resources for flaked tools (hornfels, quartz, chalcedony and possibly silcrete and basalt) and grinding tools (sandstone and granite) would have been available from the surrounding landscape. It also appears that raw materials were brought to the area from other locations.

Given the areas proximity to a number of different clans and language groups, the site may have been an important meeting and ceremonial venue.



FACT SHEET NO.10

MOKOAN - CULTURAL HERITAGE

EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

Early exploration by Europeans began in this area in the 1820's with settlement occurring in the Benalla area in the late 1830's. The area of the Mokoan wetlands was a boundary for three runs: Mokoan (originally part of Goomalibee Station), Springs Station and Springs B (Rowan Springs). Agricultural pursuits initially focused on the farming of cattle, slowly moving into sheep farming.

A number of landholders owned farms that covered the area of Lake Mokoan when the lake was created. Remains of the homesteads and associated farm buildings are still evident in some locations, most of these were probably occupied up until the flooding of the area in the early 1970's. Building materials and construction suggests that buildings date to the late 1800's. The recent survey revealed that one farmhouse site appears to be much older.



CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUES TODAY

The area of Lake Mokoan is considered to have important social, historical, scientific and Indigenous spiritual values. The heritage sites provide valuable information about past Aboriginal and European use of the area and provide Aboriginal people with an important link to their culture and their past.

The archaeological survey conducted during summer 2006 identified 40 Indigenous sites including surface artefact scatters (stone tools, axes and grinding implements) and scarred trees. In addition, nine historic sites were located, typically the remains of dwellings and structures, roads and a cemetery.



PROTECTION FOR THE FUTURE

The archaeological survey findings, among other investigations, have been considered during the development of the Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Strategy, that is presently being prepared. A major component of the strategy will be the restoration of a large wetland complex.

Agencies involved in the Mokoan – Return to Wetlands Project are committed to working with local communities to ensure the protection of cultural heritage sites and values both during and after the rehabilitation of the wetlands. Some indigenous community members consider that the current status of the lake as the preferred method of conservation.

DSE have been working with local Indigenous communities to develop protocols for management and protection of important sites and features and the communities have assisted in an archaeological assessment of the area.



Top: Cement trough

Centre: Chaff cutter

Right: Winton wetlands by Helen Aston