

# THE NEW LIVES OF OLD QUARRIES

INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT  
AFTER QUARRYING CEASES



**VICTORIA**  
State  
Government

Jobs,  
Precincts  
and Regions

# INTRODUCTION



## What happens when a quarry comes to the end of its life?

It's not a question that many of us would ask, let alone come up with an answer for. But it's something that every quarry and the community that surrounds them will need to consider at some point.

In Victoria, some of our most well-known public spaces sit on the sites of the quarries that were used to build our state. Fitzroy Gardens in central Melbourne and Princes Park in Carlton were both sources of the sand and stone that were used for our earliest buildings.

The Victorian Government is committed to promoting innovation in our quarrying sector, which is why innovation is a key theme in our Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy. This compendium provides just a few examples of where quarry land has been repurposed for uses that benefit our community.

You may be surprised. You may be inspired. A quarry may be temporary, but it supplies critical materials for our daily lives and the possibility for the future of quarried land is endless.

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\*The Extractives Strategy Taskforce oversees the implementation of the Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy. The Taskforce includes representatives from Victorian Government agencies (the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, the Department of Transport, Better Regulation Victoria and the Victorian Planning Authority) and the industry associations (Construction Material Processors' Association and Cement, Concrete and Aggregates Australia).

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Ephemeral Lake  
Mark Stoner and Edina Kaimy  
2005

SEPHORA



# VALLEY LAKE, NIDDRIE

*This award-winning residential development owes its dramatic cliff face and uniquely sloping blocks to its basalt quarry heritage.*

## AT A GLANCE



Premium residential development with approx. 575 homes



30% open space



2011 Urban Development Institute of Australia's: Victorian Urban Renewal Award



48 ha



Former basalt quarry

## THE HISTORY

- **1940-1975:** Supplied basalt for Melbourne's roads
- **2000:** Development Victoria project commenced
- **2000- :** Establishment of Valley Lake, premium residential estate development

## FEATURES

- rugged topography
- lake
- integrated sustainable urban architecture and design
- cliff-top and lakeside boardwalks
- amphitheatre
- public artwork
- Peregrine Park, that incorporates a playground & basketball court
- extensive network of recreation trails.

## INNOVATION

Valley Lake is a premium residential development, located 17 km north-west of Melbourne's CBD.

An outstanding example of innovation in action, this one-time basalt quarry is now home to a thriving community.

Since 2000, developers have enthusiastically embraced the challenges of this 'brown field' site. Creative thinking, careful planning and rehabilitation have led to a distinctive estate that's attracting residents with its unique open spaces, thoughtful landscaping and opportunity for creative, sustainable home design.

The centrepiece of the estate is the expansive lake, framed by a wide timber boardwalk and pierced by the striking public art sculpture 'The Ornithologist'.

Revealing its quarry past, the backdrop to the lake is a 30-metre-high basalt cliff face, topped by a clifftop boardwalk that offers panoramic views of Valley Lake and beyond.





## QUARRY LIFE

The 48 hectare site sits at the eastern edge of a vast lava plain that stretches from Melbourne to Mount Gambier (SA).

In the late 1930s, Reid Brothers and Reid established Fowler's Quarry (later known as Niddrie Quarry), selling it to Boral in 1965.

The quarry's primary output was basalt, which was used in many ways including paving the roads of Melbourne from the 1940s to 1975.

With houses being built closer to the quarry site, and a decrease in accessible rock, the quarry ceased operations in 1975. The site lay vacant for the next 25 years. During this time various proposals to use the site for landfill were rejected or blocked.

## NEW LIFE

In 2000, the Urban Land Corporation (now Development Victoria) purchased the Niddrie Quarry site, and developed an innovative

masterplan that embraces the site's unique features.

Before redevelopment, important rehabilitation and earthworks were undertaken.

The lake was reshaped from the quarry excavation, becoming the focus of the estate and the main open space, while the soaring basalt cliff behind it creates a stunning connection with the land.

Thanks to its quarry heritage, Valley Lake offers a variety of sloping blocks of differing inclines across the estate. This has inspired a broad range of architectural responses that capitalise on changing levels, views and prevailing breezes. Sale of the first lots commenced in 2006 with strong sales as each stage was released. Canopi Homes developed the four medium density sites around the lake, with 84 homes completed by 2014.

Development Victoria has been handing over the management of the Valley Lake estate to the City of Moonee Valley in stages. One large stage was delivered in 2017, with full handover expected by the end of 2022.








# ALL NATIONS PARK, NORTHCOTE

*In a neat twist, many of the visitors to this thriving, multi-faceted park live in homes built with bricks made from clay supplied by the site during its quarry life.*

## AT A GLANCE

-  13 hectare
-  ~7 km from Melbourne CBD
-  Former use: Clay quarry

## THE HISTORY

- 1873:** Site supplied clay to make first bricks at Patent Brick Company.
- 1889:** Approximately 1.5 million bricks were produced every ten days.
- 1977:** Quarry sold to Northcote Council.
- 1977-1998:** Former quarry used as landfill site.
- 1981:** Northcote Plaza opens on former brickworks site.
- 1998:** City of Darebin commences redevelopment of former quarry site.
- 2002:** All Nations Park opened on 23 February, with an estimated 10,000 people attending the opening.

## FEATURES

- The Olive Grove
- The Hilltop
- Veterans Walk
- ANZAC Memorial
- public artwork
- lake
- playgrounds
- skate park
- basketball half court
- outdoor gym equipment
- picnic & BBQ areas.



## INNOVATION

All Nations Park is a hugely popular destination that's been innovatively planned and thoughtfully realised to reflect the diversity and interests of its local community.

Open spaces, picnic areas, public art, a skate park, lake, performance area and All Abilities Playspace are just some of the features this 13 hectare regional park offers the estimated 750,000 visitors drawn here each year.

Walking around the park it's almost impossible to guess at its former quarry life. The only hints lie in the brick artworks around the park. These remind visitors that the site once supplied vast quantities of clay to local brickworks, prompting the saying: 'much of Melbourne is built on Northcote clay.'

## QUARRY LIFE

In 1866 publican John Roberts discovered clay soil at the rear of his hotel in Separation Street, Northcote. When the quantity and quality of the clay deposits became known, Roberts sold a large part of his property to Seymour and Charles Groom, who established the Patent Brick Company.

The first bricks left the site in 1873. In 1882 the company was purchased by the Northcote Brick Company who wasted no time developing the eight acres of land, which included a quarry that was around 12 metres deep at the time.

By its peak around 1889, the Northcote Brick Company was producing around 4 million bricks







per month using clay from the onsite quarry.

Production fluctuated over the next eight decades as the brickworks weathered strikes, the Great Depression, World Wars, sales and mergers.

Operations finally ceased in 1977, when the quarry was sold to the Northcote Council (later to become part of the City of Darebin). The site, with its clay quarry pit ranging in depth from 45-53 metres, was used for landfill until 1998, when development commenced.

The site of the brickworks and kilns was developed into Northcote Plaza which opened in the early 1980s.

## NEW LIFE

Even while the former quarry was being used as a landfill site, the City of Darebin began planning All Nations Park.

Early on, Darebin consulted with experts to develop methane and leachate management systems that would seal the site. During the four-

year redevelopment process, works proceeded to ensure that even rainfall run-off remains on site, draining into the central lake where it is stored for irrigation.

Darebin also engaged in extensive community consultation. The result? An immensely popular multi-use park, that provides a sense of place and space in the populous urban community.

From a skate bowl to dog-friendly open spaces; contemporary gardens to a hilltop lookout with views of the city skyline, there's a pocket of All Nations Park to appeal to all.

All Nations Park has also become a popular hub for hosting festivals, events and important community functions like ANZAC Day and Carols by Candlelight.





# QUARRIES PARK, CLIFTON HILL

*Bluestone quarries once graced the site that today provides visitors with impressive views of the city it helped to build.*

## AT A GLANCE



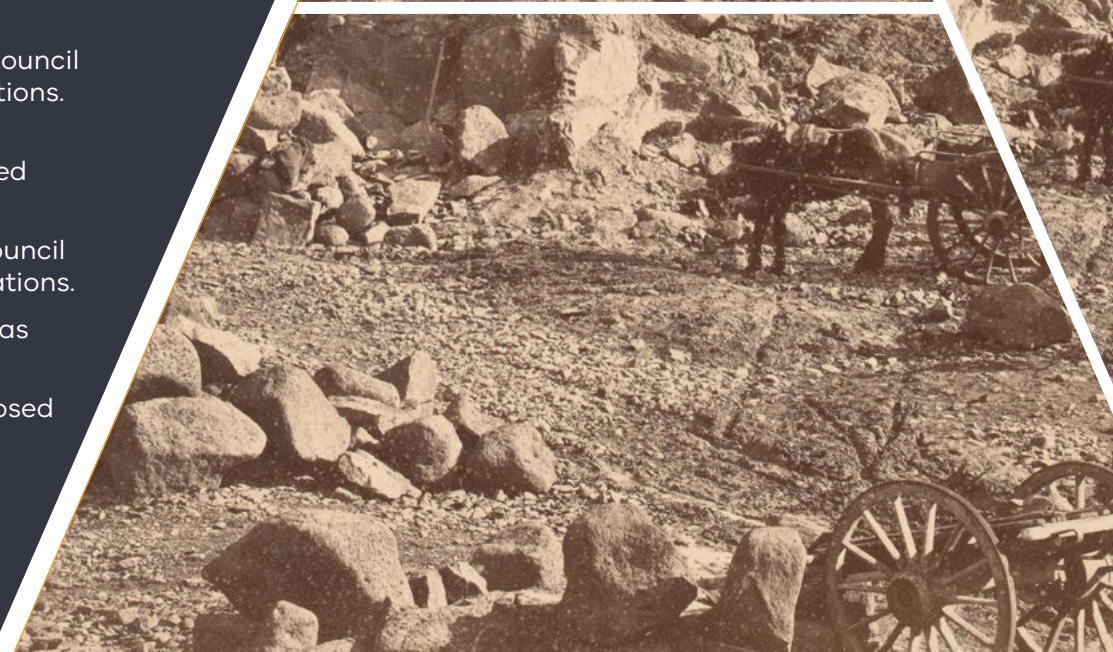
Former use: Bluestone quarries

## THE HISTORY

- **From 1846:** Small quarry operations made available for leasing to the public.
- **1850s:** Melbourne City Council Quarry began operations.
- **1880s:** Collingwood Council Quarry began operations.
- **1939:** Melbourne City Council Quarry ceased operations.
- **1963:** Collingwood Council Quarry ceased operations.
- **1960s/70s:** Site used as landfill site.
- **1970s:** Landfill site closed and redevelopment commenced.

## FEATURES

- playground (access for all abilities)
- skate park
- BBQs
- soccer ground
- cricket/Australian Rules ground
- multi-use court (cricket nets in season).





## INNOVATION

“Epic!” is the word both children and parents have used to describe the huge adventure playground at Quarries Park, Clifton Hill. The playground, combined with spectacular city views, street-style skate park and playing fields make Quarries Park a jewel in the crown of the suburb once known as ‘the Toorak of Collingwood’.

With its thoughtful landscaping, welcoming amenities and connective pathways that link to the Merri Creek (Capital City Trail) and Main Yarra trails, there’s little – aside from its name – to hint at the site’s previous life.

## QUARRY LIFE

Lava flows from an estimated two million years ago, left a rich resource of basalt in the Merri Creek Valley. This attractive stone became desirable as a building material in the mid-1800s.

At Clifton Hill, alongside Merri Creek, small quarry operations (of around half an acre) were made available for leasing to the public from 1846.

With operations underway, by the late 1840s, it was declared that most of Melbourne’s ‘better warehouses and dwellings’ were constructed from bluestone quarried from Clifton Hill.

The initial small quarry leases were subsequently resumed by the Melbourne City Council. This area was approximately 10 acres in size. In 1884, around three and a half

acres of this property was granted to the Collingwood Council for quarrying purposes. These adjoining quarries have been referred to as Corporation Quarries and Metropolitan Quarries, or Melbourne City Council Quarry and Collingwood Council Quarry.

For years, these quarries provided bluestone that greatly contributed to the distinctive characteristic of Melbourne, supplying stone for lanes, gutters and buildings across Collingwood and Melbourne.

## NEW LIFE

The Melbourne City Council Quarry closed in 1939, while Collingwood Council Quarry ceased operations in 1963.

The Quarries Park site was used as a landfill site until the 1970s.

Now, a modern resource recovery centre helps the community recycle everything from old phones to video tapes, and Quarries Park has developed into a vibrant, highly-prized feature of the community.

The park’s sporting fields are used year-round for cricket, soccer and football. While walkers enjoy the park’s paths and gently undulating open spaces. The central plateau, with its covered BBQ areas and enviable playground are the stuff of childhood memories that will live into the future, embedding Quarries Park in the community’s collective heart.





# COBURG LAKE RESERVE, COBURG

*Pentridge Prison – sometimes called the ‘Bluestone College’ – was built with stone quarried by inmates at the site now known as Coburg Lake Reserve.*

## THE HISTORY

- **1850s:** Quarrying of bluestone began in Coburg.
- **1858-64:** Primary construction of nearby Pentridge Prison.
- **1875:** 41 quarries located in Coburg.
- **1912:** Site was purchased.
- **1914:** Coburg Lake formed & reserve developed.
- **1919:** Avenues of Honour planted to commemorate fallen WWI soldiers.

## FEATURES

- Avenues of Honour
- Contemplative Garden
- lake
- playgrounds
- flying fox & nature play
- performance space
- public art
- walking circuit & shared recreation pathways.





## INNOVATION

Coburg Lake Reserve is an inviting, innovative and much-loved district park in the ever-evolving suburb of Coburg.

Once the site of a bluestone quarry that supplied stone to nearby Pentridge Prison, today the reserve's drawcard is a beautiful manmade lake contained by basaltic rock outcroppings. This, along with a performance space, outdoor gym equipment, extensive walking and bike paths and playgrounds featuring childhood favourites like a rocket ship and flying fox, ensures the reserve's year-round popularity.

## QUARRY LIFE

Quarrying of bluestone began in Coburg (then known as Pentridge) in the 1850s. By 1875 there were 41 quarries in the suburb. The quarry at the Coburg Lake Reserve site provided bluestone to build Pentridge Prison, which is located close by.

Pentridge Prison was established in 1851 and largely constructed in the period 1858-64. Before the prison was built, an ad-hoc group of structures was erected to house incarcerated men. Many of these men worked in the quarry to cut and transport bluestone that would form the walls and structures of the prison, as well as roads and tramways.

An article in *The Argus* dated June, 1856 reported: 'A gang of stonecutters, thirty in number, are at present employed in hewing blocks of stone from the quarries...Persons [prisoners] who have no trade, or who cannot learn any, are put to stonebreaking.'

## NEW LIFE

The site of Coburg Lake Reserve was purchased in 1912, and a weir constructed in 1914. This formed Coburg Lake, and the surrounding land was progressively developed into a reserve. Diving boards, wading pools (including both adult and children's pools), a kiosk and curated gardens were added over time and the reserve became an immensely popular destination in the early 20th century.

In 1918, Coburg Amateur Lifesaving and Swimming Club was formed, and they were kept busy, with members making 15-plus rescues at the lake each year. Despite best efforts, sadly some drownings did occur.

Swimming was eventually banned in 1958 due to pollution upstream. Boating and sailing ceased in the late 1960s, and the wading pools were filled with soil during the early 1970s. These days the lake is purely ornamental.

'Avenues of Honour' featuring 164 trees were planted in 1919 to commemorate local soldiers who lost their lives in World War I. The Avenues have matured into shaded formal walkways, the main avenue now descending to an expansive amphitheatre.

Today, one wall of semi-quarried stone remains to remind visitors of the reserve's former life as a quarry, while there are many examples of early bluestone retaining walls. Remnants of bluestone terrace steps and spectator terraces give an insight into where the lake's diving tower and model boat pool were once located.

From the site of hard-labour to a richly diverse urban escape that appeals to visitors of all ages, Coburg Lake Reserve has seen a dramatic transformation from quarry to new life.





# ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS CRANBOURNE

*Long-used as a source of 'Cranbourne sand', this site has undergone a spectacular, award-winning transformation.*

## AT A GLANCE



25 ha botanic garden and 300+ ha nature reserve. Site of State significance for flora and fauna conservation



### AWARDS INCLUDE:

- 2014 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) National Excellence Award for Design
- 2013 World Architecture Festival Landscape of the Year
- 2013 AILA Vic 2013 Award for Excellence
- 1998 AILA National, Project Award, Master planning Category

## THE HISTORY

- **1880s-1900:** Site used by colonial Government for military purposes
- **1920-1970:** Sand quarrying under licence
- **1970:** Part of site acquired for use as a 'native annex' to the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne
- **2005:** Stage One: Australian Garden complete
- **2012:** Stage Two: Australian Garden complete

## FEATURES

- Red Sand Garden
- Arid Garden
- River Walk
- lake & lakeside precinct
- display & research gardens
- sculptures & artworks
- visitor centre
- walking tracks
- look out tower
- bushland.



## INNOVATION

Around 50 km from Melbourne, lies the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. These extraordinary gardens are comprised of the Australian Garden – an award-winning, contemporary botanic garden – and over 300 hectares of native bushland.

Completed in 2012, the Australian Garden's exceptional design allows visitors to see the diversity, beauty and functionality of a vast array of Australian native plants.

A site of State significance for plant and wildlife conservation, the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne is home to over 25 species listed as endangered, threatened or at risk of extinction.

## QUARRY LIFE

The site is thought to have been quarried from as early as the 1820s for the sandy soil-type that's predominant in the area. Described as 'Tertiary Sands', but more often called 'Cranbourne sand', it was used extensively for purposes including bricklaying and concrete production.

In the late 1800s the site was used for military purposes, before being granted to the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. From around 1920-1970 the site was again used for sand quarrying under licence.

Far from Cranbourne, the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne was established in 1846. While the site by the Yarra was magnificent, over the years many difficulties were





encountered when establishing native species, and the Gardens began seeking a site with sandier soil to suit the purpose.

In 1970, the State Government acquired 174 hectares of the Cranbourne Gardens site for use as a 'native annex' to the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Further land acquisitions followed to increase the final site size to 363 hectares.

## NEW LIFE

The Australian Garden designed by the landscape architecture practice of Taylor Cullity Lethlean (TCL) in collaboration with the botanist Paul Thompson, is a stunning and ambitious transformation of the former sand quarry site.

Over 25 hectares in area, the Australian Garden features approximately 170,000 plants from around 1700 plant varieties. The beauty and

diversity of this vast array of Australian plants is showcased in distinct areas including the Eucalypt Walk, the Gondwana Garden, the Arid Garden and the Arbour Garden. Display Gardens also feature across the site, designed to educate and inspire visitors to further explore Australian plants in their own backyards.

The centrepiece of the Australian Garden is the impressive Red Sand Garden. An abstraction of Australia's red, arid centre the garden features an integrated ceramic artwork, 'Ephemeral Lake'. This is just one of many contemporary sculptures and artworks to delight visitors to the Garden, alongside thoughtful architecture, and playful features like the Lily Pad Bridge.

Beyond the boundaries of the Australian Garden, Cranbourne Gardens provides visitors with walking tracks to explore the native heathlands, wetlands and woodlands. A short walk takes visitors to Trig Point Lookout that provides spectacular views of the district across to Port Phillip and Western Port Bays.





# HIGHPOINT SHOPPING CENTRE, MARIBYRNONG

Built on a former basalt quarry site, Highpoint Shopping Centre is now one of Australia's leading retail destinations with a reported \$1.02 billion of moving average turnover.

## AT A GLANCE



Estimated value:  
\$2.1 billion (at Dec 2020)



7,000+ parking spaces



500+ stores

## THE HISTORY

- **1870s:** Maribyrnong Quarrying Company established at the site.
- **1910:** Essendon Council Quarry established at the site.
- **1960s:** Quarry operation ceased.
- **1972:** Development Underwriting Limited purchase site.
- **1975:** Highpoint West (later Highpoint) Shopping Centre opens.
- **2011-2013:** extensive redevelopment project.

## FEATURES

- cinemas
- restaurants
- food courts
- department stores
- supermarkets
- bowling
- art installations.



## INNOVATION

In the competitive world of 'super regional' malls, Highpoint Shopping Centre ranks amongst the top in Australia.

Located in Maribyrnong, around 8 km north-west of Melbourne's CBD, the centre opened in September 1975 on the site of the former Essendon Council Quarry.

An article in a 1974 edition of *The Age* titled 'Shop Centre site was once a hole' reports the new shopping centre will provide: 'onsite parking for more than 4200 vehicles, more than 90 individuality shops, a selection of Australia's largest retail stores...and employ more than 1000 people, mostly from the Sunshine district.'

From this impressive beginning, Highpoint has continued to expand, becoming a world class shopping destination, with over 500 stores in an outstanding contemporary environment.

Even after such extraordinary development, traces of the site's former life as a quarry can be seen in basement car parks and exposed rockfaces that border roadways.





## QUARRY LIFE

Early geological surveys of Melbourne's west revealed it contained a rich source of basalt. By the 1860s, quarrying was so prolific in the area that Footscray – a suburb near the Highpoint site – was dubbed 'Stoneopolis' and the vast majority of Footscray's residents were described in directories as 'quarrymen'.

In the early 1870s, the Maribyrnong Quarrying Company was established at the site. In 1910, the Essendon Council took over the site, establishing the Essendon Council Quarry (AKA the City of Essendon Quarry).

The quarry produced basalt, primarily used for roads. To do this more efficiently, the quarry installed a 'Jaques' horizontal lever stone crusher that the 1910 *Essendon Gazette* described as: 'a greedy, all-devouring, insatiable monster.'

By 1950, the property area was around 68 acres, including around 15 acres of quarry which continued to be known as the Essendon Council Quarry up until the late 1960s.

## NEW LIFE

In 1972, the site was purchased by developers, Development Underwriting Limited. In 1973, an

open day was held so local residents and press could view the site. *The Sunshine Advocate* reported the proposed 'shopping centre-in-a-quarry' was to cost an estimated \$30 million.

Upon opening in September 1975, Highpoint became a focal point of the suburb, and the centre has continued to expand its facilities, amenities and popularity ever since.

Highpoint underwent a \$300 million redevelopment in two stages from 2011-2013. The centre added a fashion precinct, and Fresh Food Market and Eco Mall, creating an estimated 1700 jobs.

At December 2020, the 151,000 sqm Highpoint Shopping Centre had an estimated value of \$2.1 billion.

Offering extensive retail, entertainment and lifestyle options, from cinemas to department stores, food courts to karaoke, Australian designer fashion to international retailers, there's something to cater to almost every taste at this expansive, modern hub. And for those who care to remember, some of the roads leading to Highpoint, also had their beginnings there.



# FITZROY GARDENS, MELBOURNE

*The site of one of Melbourne's earliest quarries, Fitzroy Gardens has become an impressive example of Victorian-era garden design that attracts an estimated two million visitors each year.*

## AT A GLANCE



2 km from  
Melbourne GPO



Heritage-listed

Named after Sir Charles Augustus FitzRoy, Governor of New South Wales (1846–55) who also served as governor-general from 1851.



26 ha (64 acres)

## THE HISTORY

- **c1839:** Quarry opened at site.
- **1848:** Reserved as public parkland.
- **1859:** Laid out and developed as gardens.
- **1917:** City of Melbourne took sole control of Fitzroy Gardens.
- **1930:** Conservatory established.
- **1934:** Cooks' Cottage established.
- **1947:** Model Tudor Village established.

## FEATURES

- Cooks' Cottage
- Conservatory
- visitors centre
- café
- model Tudor village
- Fairies' Tree carved sculpture
- fountains
- statues & sculptures
- walking paths
- floral displays
- lawns.

## INNOVATION

At one time or another, most Melburnians will pass through Fitzroy Gardens. Whether it's a school trip to Cooks' Cottage, a quiet moment at the Conservatory or simply a stroll along the magnificent elm lined pathways, the Gardens have been delighting visitors for generations.

Diverse and layered, the Gardens follow a classic Victorian-era design. A network of structured paths entices visitors to 'promenade' through the Gardens to experience various features including extensive lawns, floral displays and myriad fountains.

The Gardens were heritage-listed in 1998, with the *Victorian Heritage Register* noting: 'The Fitzroy Gardens are of historical, aesthetic, architectural, scientific (horticultural) and social significance to the State of Victoria.'

Situated on the edge of the CBD, Fitzroy Gardens contributes magnificently to Melbourne's reputation as 'the Garden State', and there remains little – if any – trace of the Gardens' former life as a quarry.







## QUARRY LIFE

The first quarries were opened in Melbourne in the 1830s and 1840s, located at the Fitzroy Gardens, Carlton and Clifton Hill.

Operations to quarry bluestone at the Fitzroy Gardens site are believed to have begun in 1839. The large holes left were reportedly filled with refuse, creating an eyesore for the burgeoning city.

Responding to public request, the Fitzroy Gardens site (first known as Fitzroy Square) was reserved as parkland in 1848, by Governor Charles La Trobe. Along with providing public benefits, the Gardens allowed the colonialists of the day to test the potential of 'New World' trees and plant species.

The site was partially cleared and fenced during the late 1840s and 1850s, and in 1859, the reserve was laid out and developed as a garden under the supervision of Deputy Surveyor-General Clement Hodgkinson.

## NEW LIFE

While following a classic Victorian-era design, over time Fitzroy Gardens has evolved as each curator introduced a slightly different landscape style that altered its overall character.

While the landscape has become more diverse and layered throughout the decades, the Gardens retain a simplified (and resurfaced) version of their original path system. Magnificent avenues of elms and other species, provide a framework for the wide rolling lawns, with special features like floral displays, statues and fountains placed throughout.

A key attraction of Fitzroy Gardens is Cooks' Cottage, which was originally built in Yorkshire, England in 1755 by the parents of navigator and explorer Captain James Cook. Although Captain Cook never lived in the cottage, the connection to the family was strong enough to prompt Sir Russell Grimwade to have the cottage relocated and rebuilt brick-by-brick in Fitzroy Gardens in 1934.

As Fitzroy Gardens continues to mature and evolve, future generations can enjoy the foresight of Melbourne's 19th century urban planners in turning a former quarry into an enduringly significant and restful oasis on the city's edge.





# QUARRY RESERVE, FERNTREE GULLY

*Adjacent to the Dandenong Ranges National Park, this former quarry is now a popular fishing spot, and visitors may even glimpse goats at work.*

## AT A GLANCE



40 km from  
CBD



Popular  
fishing spot



Former  
basalt  
quarry

## THE HISTORY

- **1888:** First quarry at site.
- **Early 1900s:** Herman and Gillis purchase quarry site.
- **-1981:** Various quarry owners/operators including F G Kerr Pty Ltd and Farley & Lewers.
- **1982:** CSR Readymix took over site.
- **1995:** Quarry operations ceased.
- **2007:** Residential subdivision of northern portion of site completed. Transfer of southern portion of land to Knox City completed.
- **2007+:** Ongoing site rehabilitation, development and opening of Quarry Reserve.
- **2019:** Lake stocked with fish.
- **2020:** New playground installed.

## FEATURES

- lake
- over-water fishing platforms
- shelter
- walking paths
- fishing
- birdwatching
- BBQ area
- playground.



## INNOVATION

With a long quarry life behind it, Quarry Reserve is now a beautiful place to spend a leisurely afternoon fishing, picnicking or simply strolling the easy walking paths.

Formed from the former quarry pit, the stunning lake is the drawcard of the reserve. To attract anglers, the lake has been stocked with catchable size rainbow trout, golden perch and Murray cod since 2019. Now, anyone willing to try their luck can cast a line while relaxing on the over-water fishing platforms.

Visitors can also enjoy sightings of a variety of birds including regionally uncommon Peregrine Falcons that nest in the former quarry's steep cliffs.

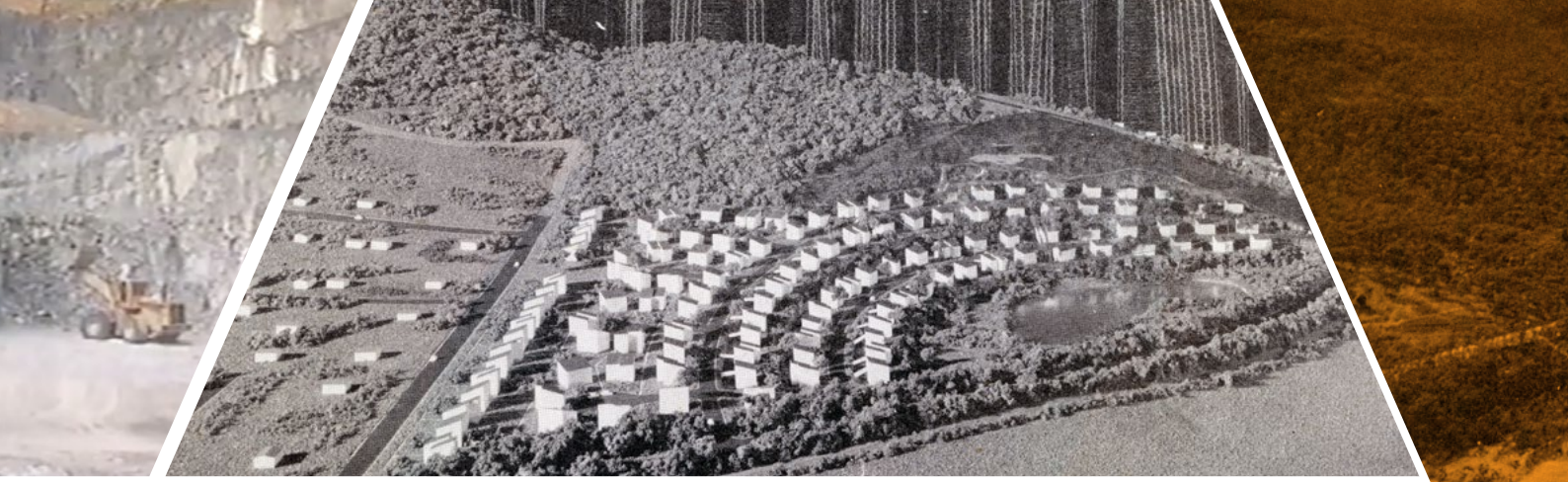
Extensive rehabilitation, development and innovation, have transformed this site into an inviting recreation destination for locals and tourists alike.

## QUARRY LIFE

Around 40 km south-east of Melbourne's CBD, the Quarry Reserve site is located in the Mt Dandenong Volcanics Group, within the Kalorama Rhyodacite formation.

Discovery of this rich source of rhyodacite (colloquially referred to as basalt), led to reservation of the site for quarry purposes in 1879.





The first quarry began in 1888, and in the early 1900s, Herman and Gillis purchased the site, expanding quarry operations. Local historians note that the quarry supplied materials for most of the early roads in the area, along with ballast for the rail tracks when the railway came to Ferntree Gully.

Throughout the 20th century, the quarry changed hands several times. F G Kerr Pty Ltd owned the site for three decades, from 1948-1978. In 1982, CSR Readymix took over the site, becoming its final owner.

The advancement of equipment and technology radically altered the output of the quarry over its lifespan. In the 1920s, it's estimated the quarry produced around 25,000 tonnes of rock per year, while by the early 1990s the quarry was producing over 700,000 tonnes per year.

The quarry ceased operations in December 1995.

## NEW LIFE

From as early as 1972, end-of-life planning was underway for the quarry site. A Committee of Review was formed, public hearings were held and experts consulted. This provided a foundation for the final masterplan for the site.

Prior to ending operations, CSR Readymix undertook initial rehabilitation across some unquarried sections of the site. After the quarry closed, the site went through an extensive planning and rezoning process. This facilitated the residential subdivision of the northern portion of the site, and the transfer of the southern portion of the site – including the quarry pit – to Knox City Council as Public Open Space, which was completed in 2007.

Through extensive rehabilitation works, the quarry pit has been partially infilled, while the remainder forms the lake and surrounding parklands. The quarry floor was brought up by more than 35m to form the base of the new lake.

Knox City Council has taken some innovative measures to turn the former quarry into a stunning nature reserve. Not least of which is employing a herd of around 30 goats to sustainably control weeds in difficult to access areas of the site.

A new playground was completed in 2020, and Council plans to continue planting trees and improving trail links to make the reserve even more appealing to birds, animals and people in years to come.



# PLENTY GORGE PARKLANDS, SOUTH MORANG

*One former quarry site within these diverse parklands has been developed into a popular recreation area, while others have become important refuges for wildlife.*

## AT A GLANCE



20 km from  
Melbourne  
CBD



Significant wildlife refuge.  
Home to around 265  
animal species

## THE HISTORY

- **1841:** The area proclaimed a "settled district".
- **1851:** Bushfires destroyed properties on western side of Plenty River, leading to basalt quarrying.
- **1959:** Reid Quarries commenced operations at 'Blue Lake' site.
- **1960s:** Boral took over the quarry.
- **1970s:** Quarrying ceased.
- **1997:** Yellow Gum Recreation Area (inc. Blue Lake) site purchased by (now) Parks Victoria.
- **1999:** Yellow Gum Recreation Area opened to the public.

## FEATURES

- lake
- walking trails
- bird watching
- fishing
- BBQs
- picnic areas
- wildlife.



## INNOVATION

Plenty Gorge Park lies just 20 km from Melbourne's CBD. The expansive 18.8 hectare parklands are home to abundant wildlife and a variety of contrasting landforms, land uses and vegetation.

Visitors can enjoy the park's steep gorges, woodlands, forests and wetland areas, along with an historic homestead, multiple recreation areas, walking trails and picnic areas.

Over the last 150 years, several sites across the parklands were quarried and have now become significant features of the landscape.

Long-disused basalt quarry holes have filled with water and now provide wetland habitats for important bird life that visits the park. While a quarry that closed in the early 1970s, has been developed into the Yellow Gum Recreation Area. This area includes the beautiful Blue Lake – named for the water that can appear blue on occasion due to mineral deposits.

## QUARRY LIFE

Plenty Gorge Park lies broadly along the dividing line between two distinct landscape types, with basalt underlying the park to the west of the Plenty River, and sediments of sandstone, mudstone and shale to the east.

This geology has led to mining and quarrying of basalt, aggregates and even gold within the park boundaries.

Early settlers coming to the area made their homes on the western (basalt) side of the river.





In 1851, a bushfire ravaged the area, which led to the quarrying of bluestone to construct more fire-resistant buildings. Little is known about the operations of these early quarries, but remnants show basalt was predominantly quarried from river banks and terraces.

Over a century later, another fire raged through the area. This time it affected the eastern (sedimentary rock) side of the Plenty River. The fires caused owners of the large 'Clear Hill' property to subdivide their land, and a portion was purchased by Reid Quarries.

From 1959, the quarry produced materials that were used in the construction of many of Melbourne's early skyscrapers.

Boral took over the site in the 1960s, and operations continued into the early 1970s when groundwater seeping into the quarry hole caused it to close. This is now Blue Lake.

## NEW LIFE

Basalt quarrying significantly changed the landscape of the parklands area, creating lakes where quarry holes have filled with water. Some of these have been developed and now provide important wetland habitats for birds visiting the park.

Parks Victoria purchased the site of the Boral quarry in 1997 and developed it into the Yellow Gum Recreation Area and Blue Lake. Easily accessible by public transport, both are very popular destinations, offering activities including bushwalking, fishing, birdwatching and picnicking.

Today, with outstanding management from Parks Victoria, the parklands – including the ex-quarry sites – is recognised as being one of Greater Melbourne's most important refuges for both threatened and regionally significant species.

An incredible 200 bird species have been sighted at the park, and around 265 animal species call it home.









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This publication has been revised to only contain sites that have delivered approved rehabilitation outcomes. Public safety is of the utmost importance, all rehabilitation plans, innovative or otherwise, must provide a safe stable and sustainable landform first and foremost.

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