

# 31. Mollison Creek, Pyalong



All the tributaries of Mollison Creek meet in the vale of Pyalong before cutting through the edge of the granite and its aureole. The land along Mollison Creek in Pyalong is a mix of gentle meanders through river flats and reed beds and cascades through granite boulders, with a weir and pondage in the township. The high wooden trestle bridge marks the route of the old railway across the creek. The reserve has many access points and a variety of walks along the waterfront.

*Mollison Creek is on the land of the Taungurung People and the environs of Mollison Creek have sites of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#). We acknowledge their Elders past and present and emerging, and their care of Country over many millennia. We ask that all people respect this ancient heritage and care for the land we now share.*

## Directions

Mollison Creek is accessible from several points through Pyalong:

*Power Street* off High Street West (beside the police station) leads to a dirt road beside the upper section of the creek including the pondage.

*Sandy Creek Road* is a dirt road running along the north side of the upper section. It is reached via West Road, Bourke Street and Sutherland Street.

*Bridge Street* can be reached from Nicholson Street or Atkinson Street, with three points of access to the creek. The west (highway) end of Bridge Street provides access to the spectacular rocky section of Mollison Creek downstream from the Highway. Continuing to the end of Nicholson Street, the ground slopes down to the creekline with grassy floodplains and sandy beaches. The east end of Bridge Street gives views of the Trestle Bridge and steep access to another section of grassy floodplain and sandy sections of the creek. **Note:** the terrain is difficult and there are no tracks along the creek between these three points off Bridge Street.

*Seymour Pyalong Road:* at the downstream end of the gorge (before the road swings away from the creek), a gravel access track runs steeply off the road to a low bridge across the creek. **Note:** double lines on the bend in the road mean that vehicles can only safely enter the track coming from the Seymour direction, and should turn left towards Pyalong when re-entering the road.

[Handsford Creek Railway Bridge Historic Reserve](#) on the Northern Highway south of Pyalong has another old trestle bridge in a small creekside reserve.

## Walking Tracks

The Mollison Creek corridor has no walking tracks. Power Street and Sandy Creek Road are suitable for pedestrians, with a pedestrian connection across the highway bridge from the town. Some of the grassy flood plains are easy to walk along. Rocky sections are only for the intrepid.

**Note:** The map of the “Reserve” follows the public land on the streamside of any fences or major roads abutting the public land. As some public/private boundaries are not fenced, you may unwittingly be walking on private land in some sections of floodplain particularly downstream from the trestle bridge.



Power Street and Sandy Creek Road are flat gravel roads suitable for all abilities but access routes from the town may be less accessible. Other sections of the creekline reserve are not accessible.



Few picnic facilities are available as most of the Reserve is subject to flooding

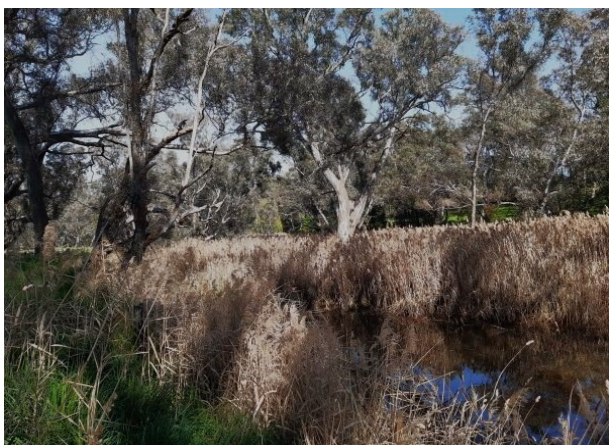
**T** Toilets are available in High Street, Pyalong

## Landform and Geology



Pyalong sits in a valley at the eastern edge of the rolling hills of the Pyalong Granite. East of Pyalong and the Northern Highway is a line of steep hills, the hard metamorphic aureole that marks the edge of the granite. Mollison Creek and tributaries have cut many wide valleys through the granite. These streams come together in Pyalong. Downstream, the creek has cut a gorge through the hard metamorphic aureole, visible on the Seymour Pyalong Road as heavy blocks of hornfels (hard rock).

In Pyalong, a low weir has created a long pool of still water. Below the weir, the stream wends through rounded granite boulders, then a short section of creek with flood plains, before running south through more granite boulders to the end of Nicholson Street. From here, the stream again runs through a series of flat terraces and flood plains formed from the build-up of sandy sediments.



According to the Pyalong CWA (1948), "Mollison Creek was, at one time, a fine stream, and we quote an early summer-time description of it: 'It was a long line of deep pools of water, some over twenty feet deep, well stocked with fish. Red gums and white gums overhung the water.' Today like so many other Australian streams, it is a sad legacy of one of the big mistakes our pioneers made. In their zeal to clear the land they destroyed trees on hillsides which were the natural storages of the water that supplied the

streams with a permanent flow. Soil erosion is only too evident today, and it is our duty to repair as far as possible the damage done, or at least arrest its progress. Mollison Creek, today, is a wide stretch of sand and silt washed from the hillsides with local businesses sending 'about ten sixteen-ton trucks of sand to Melbourne each week'.

Over the years the sand has stabilized and become vegetated with native Reeds (*Phragmites australis*), wattles and river red gums that help to trap the sand. The stream has cut through these banks of sand and started to recreate a chain of ponds and islands. But each flood brings more sand slugs changing the stream bed again and again. Revegetation projects by landholders and



Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare Group are now helping to hold the water and silts on the hill-sides of the granite country, allowing the creek to recover.

## Vegetation

Matching the geology, the vegetation communities are [Grassy Dry Forest](#) on the drier ridges and [Valley Grassy Forest](#) on the moister outwash slopes above the floodplain.

The flatter floodplains are [Creepline Grassy Woodland](#) with [Swampy Riparian Woodland](#) in a few wetter patches of floodplain particularly near spring soaks coming out of the hills. One of these is fenced for conservation downstream from the Trestle Bridge. Reed-beds with emerging woody plants are found in the deeper sandy sections of the creepline, particularly in areas above the Trestle Bridge that have filled with sand slugs over the recent past. [Riparian Shrublands](#) occur on the rocky streambeds battered by floods.

River Red Gums are the dominant trees and there are some grand old trees with hollows on the floodplains. Occasional Swamp Gums identify swamplier patches. Silver Wattles are the main understorey species. Lower shrubs are scattered mostly close to the creek and in the rocky areas. These include Sweet Bursaria and Woolly Tea-tree. Most of the ground cover in deeper soils is grasses with Spiny Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*).

Common Reeds (*Phragmites australis*) tend to dominate the wetter ground and shallow pools on the flood plains. Although a few other wetland species are present, this dominance is a natural situation common to many wetlands. Reeds help to stabilise the ground and protect it from floods, naturally bending so flood water runs over the top of the soils and the vegetation.

As with many waterways, the rich moist environment attracts a lot of introduced species.

Plant list is in preparation.

## Wildlife

The habitat corridors of trees and wattles and wetlands bring a lot of wildlife to the town. In particular, the large old trees with hollows attract hollow-dependent species such as the Sacred Kingfisher, Tree Martins and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, and probably owls, possums and gliders. The reed beds are enriched by the loud calls of the well-named Australian Reed Warbler. Black Wallabies and Eastern Grey Kangaroos are often seen in the Reserve.

Fauna lists are in preparation.

## Aboriginal history

The Reserve is on the land of the Taungurung People and is an area of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#). This section of Mollison Creek would have been a rich place to live. Until Europeans

took the land, it had been an excellent food source for the local clan, according to a history prepared by the Pyalong CWA in 1948. “Their favourite haunts seemed to be the many pools in the creek where black fish and minnows abounded. The vicinity of such places would also be the habitat of possums and kangaroos. To this day, their ovens can be found about the homestead of the first white settlers.” The silting of the deep pools and the changed habitat for fish and yabbies would have been a great loss.

## History after colonisation



The creek was named for the Mollison brothers who occupied the 60,000 acre Pyalong station with 20,000 sheep plus horses and cattle from 1838 until the land was thrown open for selection in the 1860s.

By then, Pyalong township had been ambitiously surveyed and traffic along the Northern Highway increased with the McIvor (Heathcote) gold rush.

The railway from Heathcote Junction to Heathcote and Bendigo was built in 1889 including many trestle bridges. The railway was used to

deliver timber shafts to the Bendigo mines as well as building timber and firewood. The line was finally closed in 1968. There are now plans to create a rail trail along the old rail easement.

## Management

Most of the Mollison Creek Water Frontage through the town is unlicensed Crown land officially managed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), although the actual management of the corridor (and the Trestle Bridge) is as confusing as the boundaries of the reserved land (see below).

Mitchell Shire maintains the roads through the frontage and does some mowing adjacent to these roads. The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority provides works permits and undertakes works with the stream channel (bed and banks). The GBCMA also supports landholders to improve stream frontages and arrange [Riparian Management Licences](#); this might apply to frontages upstream and downstream from the Reserve. Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare Group has been clearing weeds and replanting sections of the Creek above the weir.

The creekline is under an Environmental Significance Overlay in the Mitchell Shire Planning Scheme.

Friends of Bendigo-Kilmore Rail Trail and Mitchell Bicycle Users Group have been lobbying for the rail reserve through Pyalong to be part of the [Heathcote to Wallan Rail Trail](#).

The Crown land is included in the [Land Use Activity Agreement](#), a part of the [Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement](#). The land along Mollison Creek is an area of [Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity](#).

## Further information

Mitchell Shire Council:

Trestle Bridge: <https://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/discovermitchell/points-of-interest/old-trestle-bridge>

Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail Feasibility Study at <https://engagingmitchellshire.com/wallan-to-heathcote-rail-trail>

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). Information on Crown Land management at <https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/land-management/managing-crown-land>

Pyalong CWA (1948). Members of the Pyalong C.W.A. prepared the "History of Pyalong and District". Kilmore Free Press 8 January 1948.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/58157152#P5922268>

Taungurung Land and Water Council at <https://taungurung.com.au>. Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement at <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/native-title/taungurung-recognition-and-settlement-agreement>

Goulburn Broken CMA Revegetation Guide: information on different ecological vegetation communities, plant communities and plants in the Pyalong zone at <https://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au/revegetation/zones/pyalong>

Mitchell Bicycle Users Group: <https://mbug.org.au>

Friends of Bendigo-Kilmore Rail Trail: proposed Heathcote to Wallan Rail Trail:

<https://bendigokilmorerailtrail.com/possible-extension>

## Acknowledgements

This Reserve Note was prepared by BEAM Mitchell Environment Group. Thanks to Mitchell Shire Council and the Goulburn Broken CMA for their assistance and support.

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Version: 1 19 May 2024

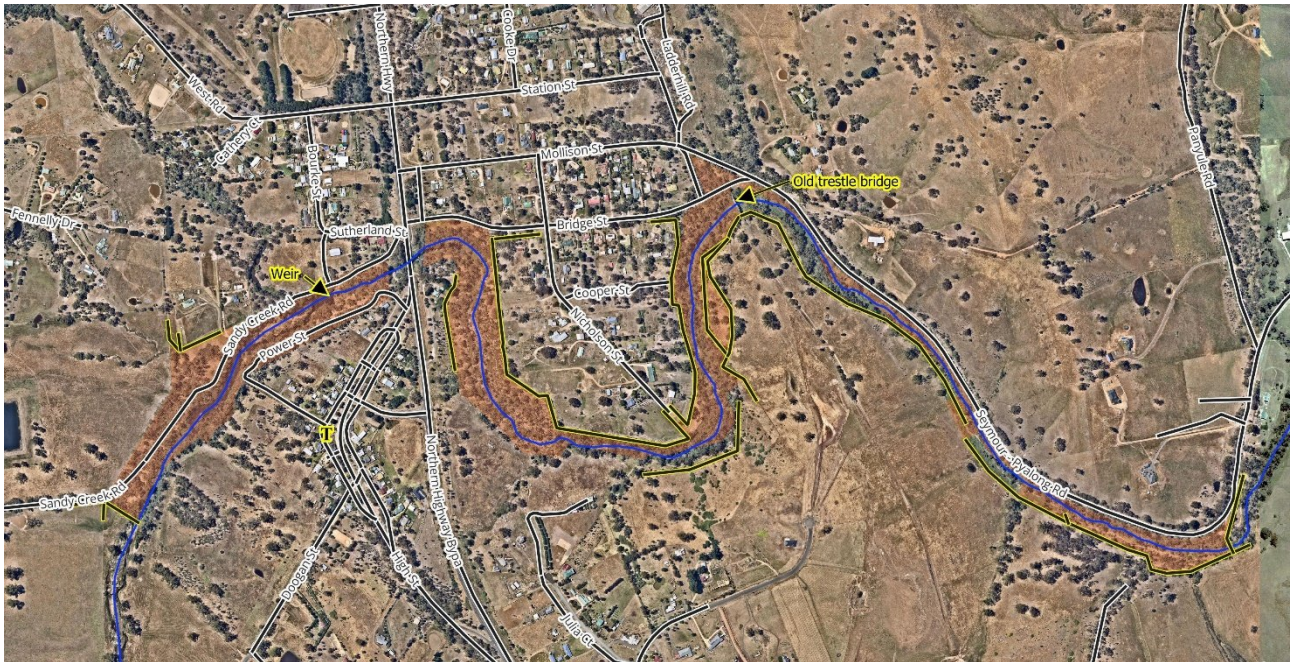
These notes are a work in progress. If you have any comments or additional information on the nature and ecological history of Mollison Creek in Pyalong, please contact us at

<https://www.beam.org.au/contact>.





## Mollison Creek in Pyalong



 Mollison Creek Streamside Reserve	 Fences (incomplete)	 Toilet
 Mollison Creek (approx location)	 Roads	

### Mapping the boundaries of the Mollison Creek Streamside Reserve:

This note and map focus on the stream and floodplain corridor along Mollison Creek through Pyalong. The preparation of maps used current maps of public land boundaries and aerial photos of fencelines where they were visible and GPS readings where they were accessible. Fences do not always follow title boundaries. The map of the creekline reserve through Pyalong was generally based on either the public land boundary or fenceline, whichever was the closest to the creek. Roads were excluded from the Reserve where the road and water frontage shared the same title (except Sandy Creek Road and Power Street adjacent to the weir). Downstream from the trestle bridge, sections of Mollison Creek and most of the wide floodplain are on private land although the fenceline is back from the floodplain making it difficult to be sure of the position of the boundary between public and private land.

*There are more detailed maps on the next two pages.*



