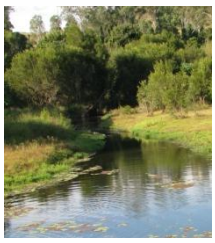
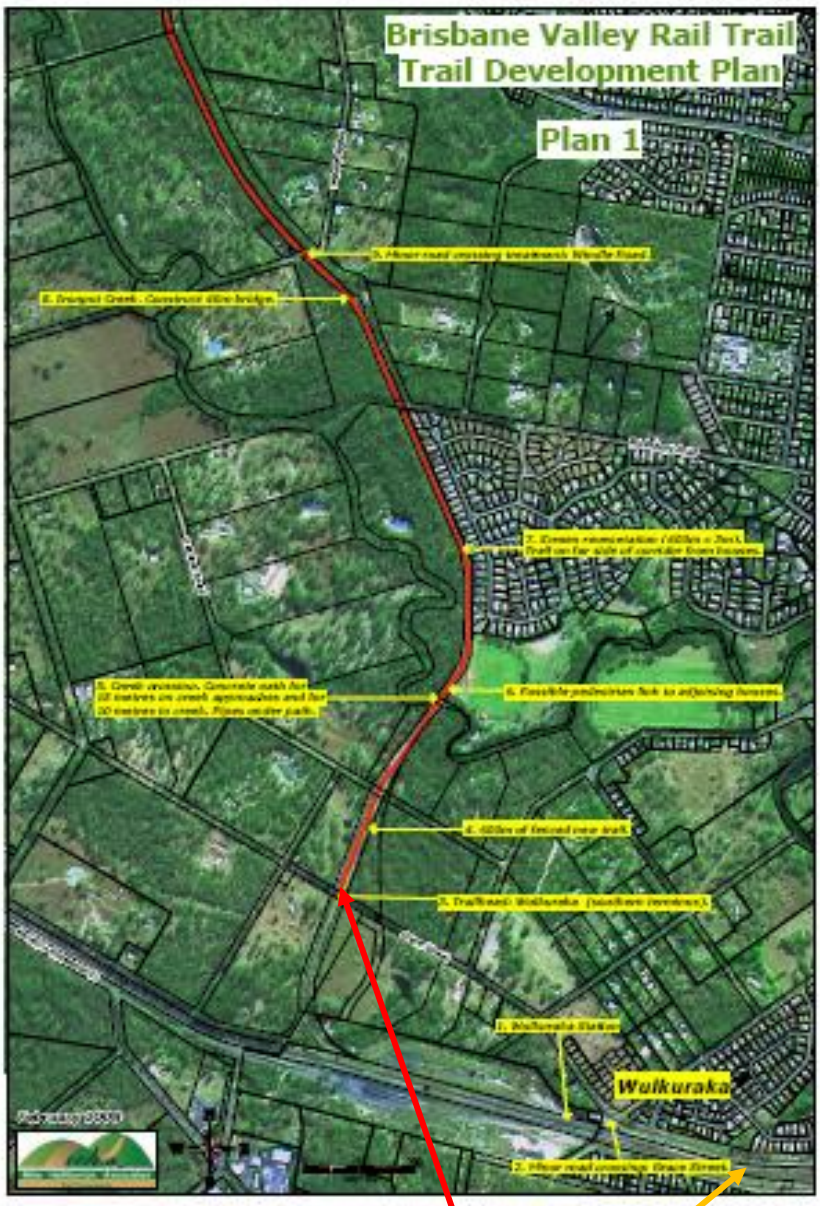


BRISBANE VALLEY RAIL TRAIL
CULTURAL HERITAGE MAP
2010

SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND TRADITIONAL OWNERS ASSOCIATION
&
DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING, QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

TURNSTONE ARCHAEOLOGY

TA 2010-42

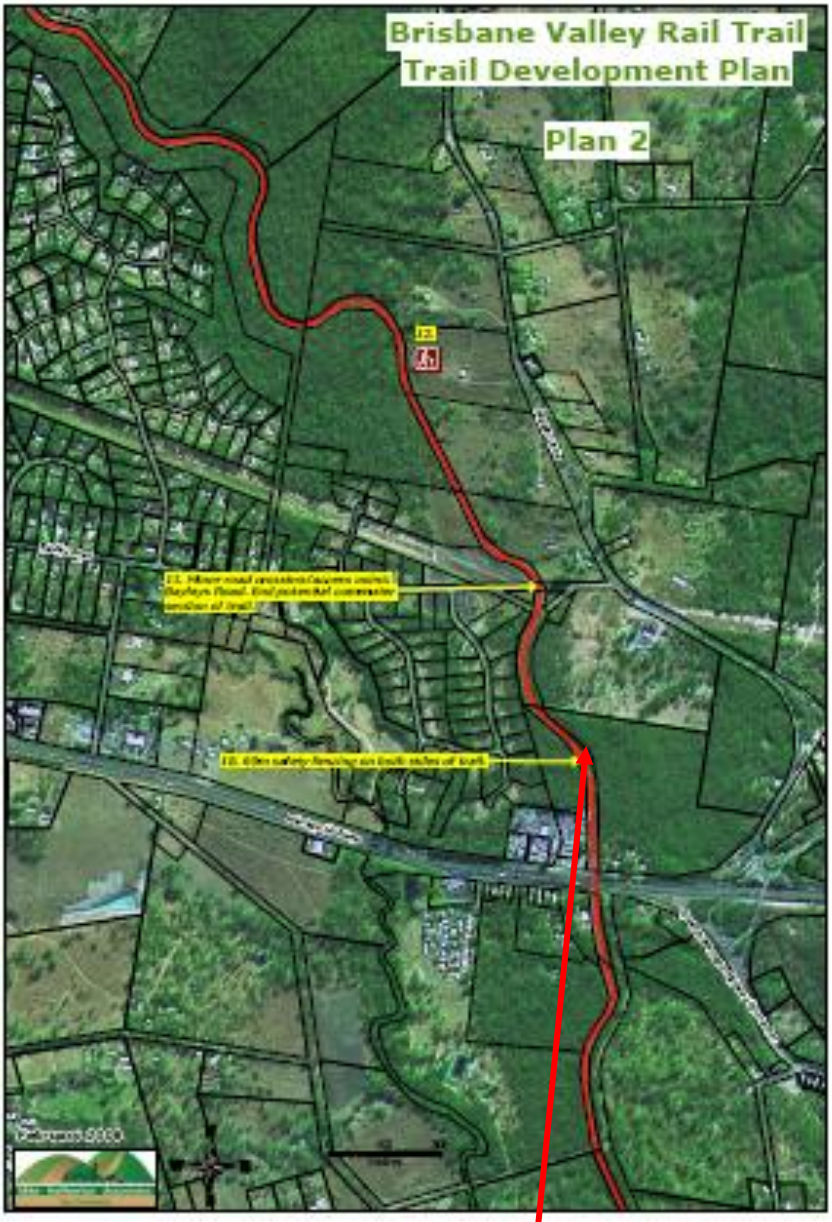


MAP 1

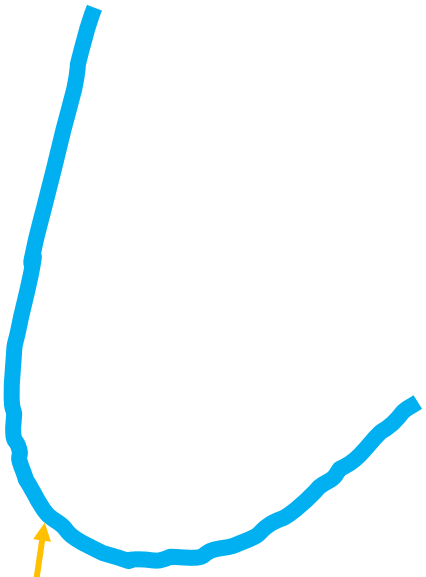
1 BEFORE SETTLEMENT

European settlement of Ipswich began with the discovery in 1826 along the banks of the Bremer River of limestone suitable for building construction. The settlement became known as Limestone. But Ipswich has an older history that belonged to Aboriginal peoples living along the Brisbane and Bremer Rivers. Although the boundaries are uncertain, it seems that two clans lived east of the great Rosewood scrubs — the smaller Woogaroo clan based around Goodna and Redbank, and the Rosewood clan from Ipswich towards Grandchester and Franklin Vale. They spoke the Yuggera or Jagera language.

Aboriginal people have left behind a rich mosaic of history — bora or initiation grounds; artefact concentrations, campsites, crossing places, quarries and pathways. The limestone produced chalcedony nodules — a siliceous rock that made excellent stone tools, highly regarded by Aboriginal people.



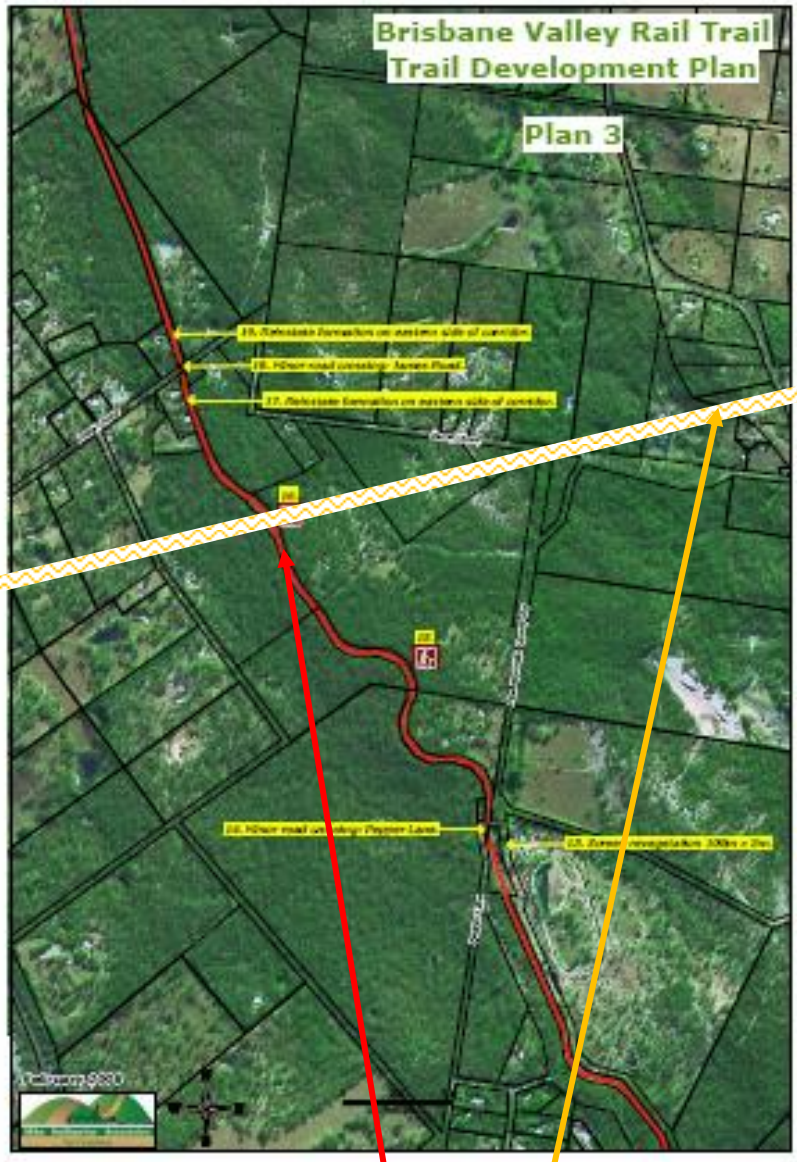
Map 2



Brisbane River at Kholo

2 ANCIENT PATHWAYS AND CROSSINGS

About 3 kilometres east of the Rail Trail is a shallow gravelly bend of the Brisbane River at Kholo. Allan Cunningham, during his first exploration of the river in 1824, met an Aboriginal man fishing with a spear who showed them where to cross. The man had a basket containing a Brisbane River Cod, a subspecies of Eastern Freshwater Cod (*Maccullochella ikei*) now extinct since the 1930s from overfishing, habitat destruction and siltation.

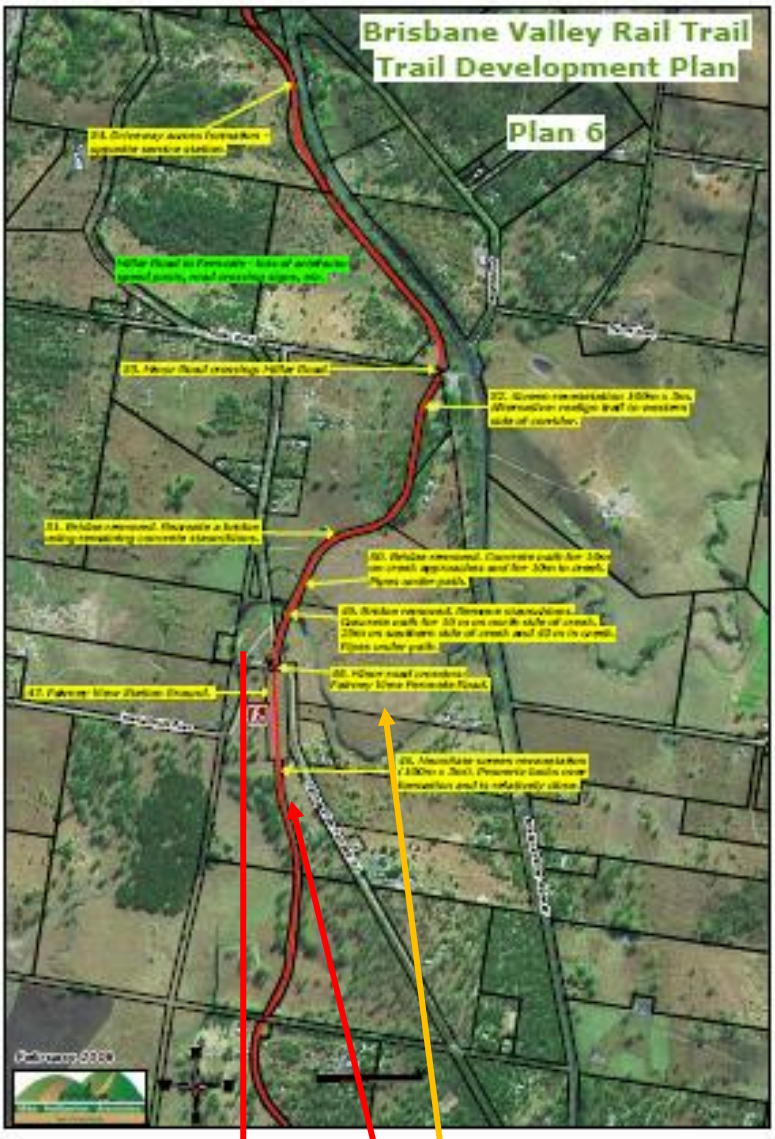


MAP 3

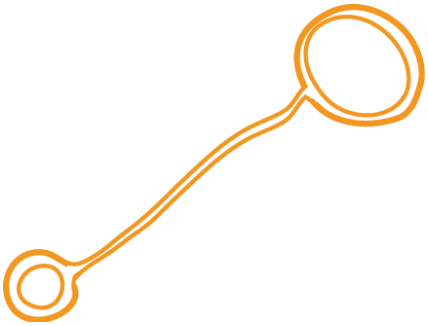
PINE MOUNTAIN

3 DREAMING TRACKS LINK THE LAND

In the Dreaming, before time, ancestor spirits moved across the landscape, creating natural features like waterholes and creeks, mountains and hills. These dreaming tracks or songlines form a metaphysical network that unites the natural and supernatural worlds. Aboriginal people would perform ceremonies at certain places along these songlines to keep the earth alive, and to reinforce their connection to country. One of the greatest songlines in southeast Queensland stretches from Gowrie Mountain near Toowoomba to Mt Coot-tha. It crosses the Rail Trail near Pine Mountain, a highly significant hill with associated bora grounds and ceremonial sites.



MAP 4



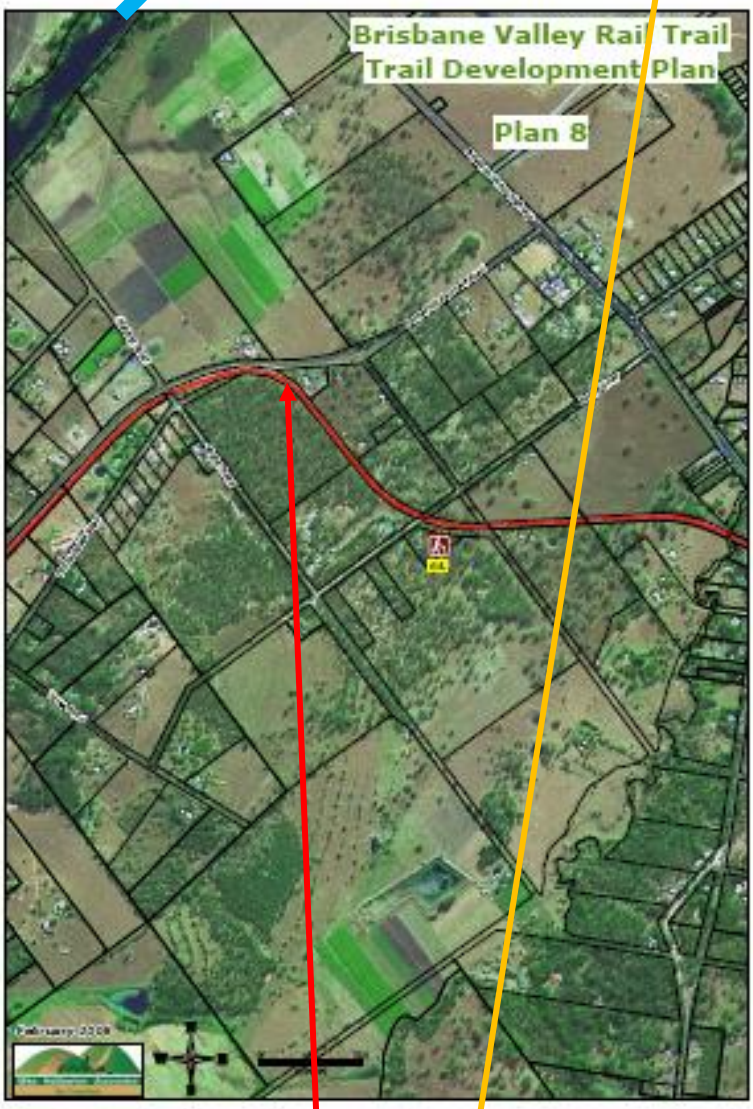
4 FAIRNEYVIEW BORA GROUND — HERITAGE LOST

Bora grounds are a feature of south east Queensland's cultural heritage. They are usually shallow earthen rings about 20-25 metres in diameter. Some have connecting paths that lead to a smaller 'kippa' or initiation ring where boys ('kippas') were initiated into manhood. However, rings were also used for increase ceremonies and meetings of the bora or council of elders, to discuss infringements of the law and territorial disputes and were often located on pathways or near some natural feature.

The Fairneyview bora ground was located behind the railway station near an important waterhole and was destroyed in the 1970s.

5 FAIRNEYVIEW LAGOON

Black Snake Creek — which crosses the Rail Trail at this point — is a meandering creek system flowing to the Brisbane River that formed a series of lagoons and wetlands important to Aboriginal people for food resources and water. Eels, fish, yabbies, ducks and turtles could all be caught in these wetlands.



MAP 5

Brisbane River

6 WHITE ABORIGINES REPORTED

One of the reasons for Major Edmund Lockyer's exploration of the Brisbane River in 1825 was a report by John Gray of a tribe of white men with bows and arrows near Fernvale Bridge. Governor Brisbane instructed Lockyer to seek out this tribe and note 'their dispositions, complexion, dress and customs with their means of hostility and defence'. It is most likely that Gray saw a group of Aboriginal people painted for ceremony and mistook their weapons for bows and arrows.

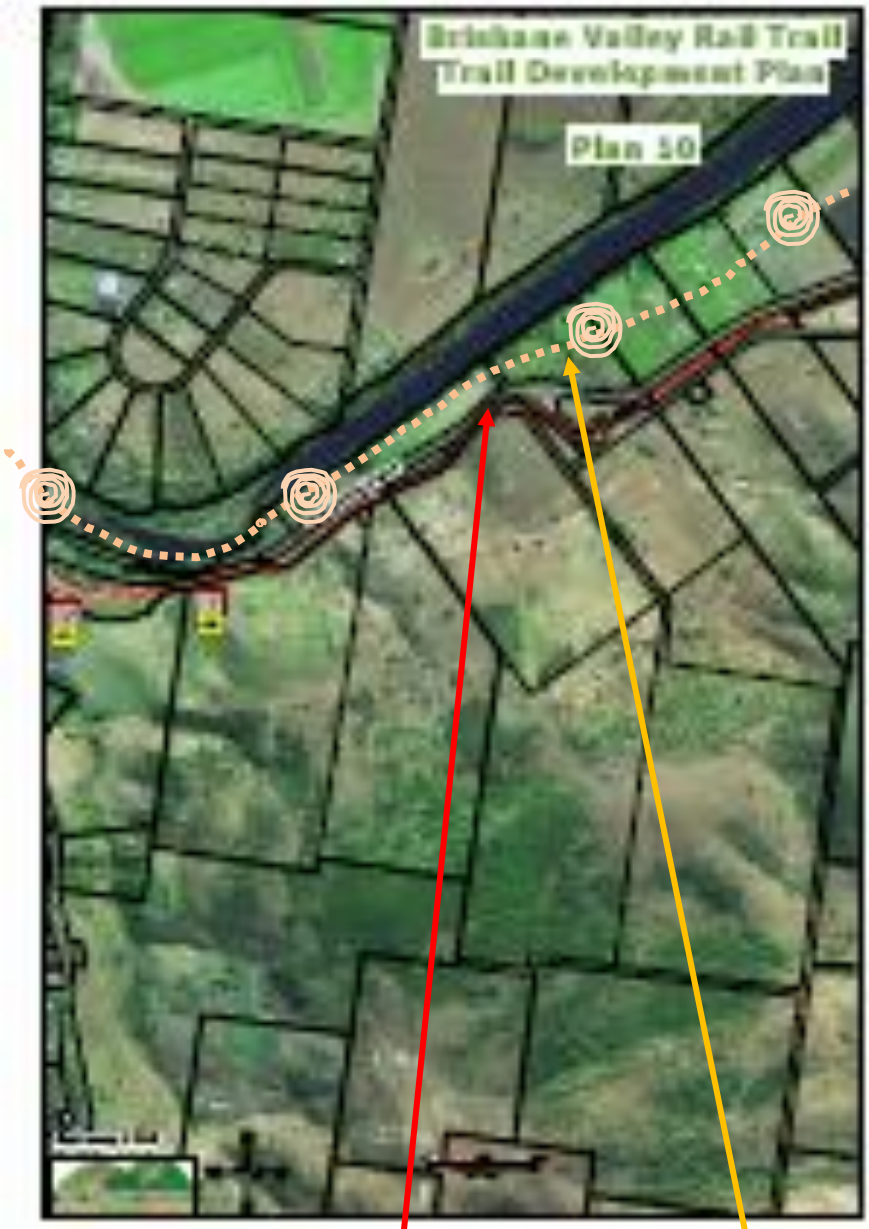
MAP 6

7 THE GREAT SCRUB

West of Fernvale and down towards Rosewood and Gatton stretched the great Rosewood Scrub, a dense semi-evergreen vine forest. Scrub species included Brigalow *Acacia harpophylla*, Rosewood *A. fasciculifera*, Crows Ash *Flindersia australis*, Leopard Ash *F. collina*, Rose Almond *Owenia venosa*, Hoop Pine *Araucaria cunninghamii* , Scrub Boonaree *Alectryon diversifolius*, Hard Alectryon *A. subdentatus*, Currant Bush *Carissa ovata*, Brush Ironbark *Bridelia exaltata*, White Tamarind *Elattostachys xyolcarpa*, Silver Croton *Croton insularis*, *Canthium buxifolium* and a range of prickly twining vines. Cunningham wrote:

> *"brushes, twenty feet high, of great density, and rendered the more difficult of penetration by the twining shrubs, with which these thickets are matted together...perfectly impervious; in no part to be penetrated by heavily laden bullocks."*

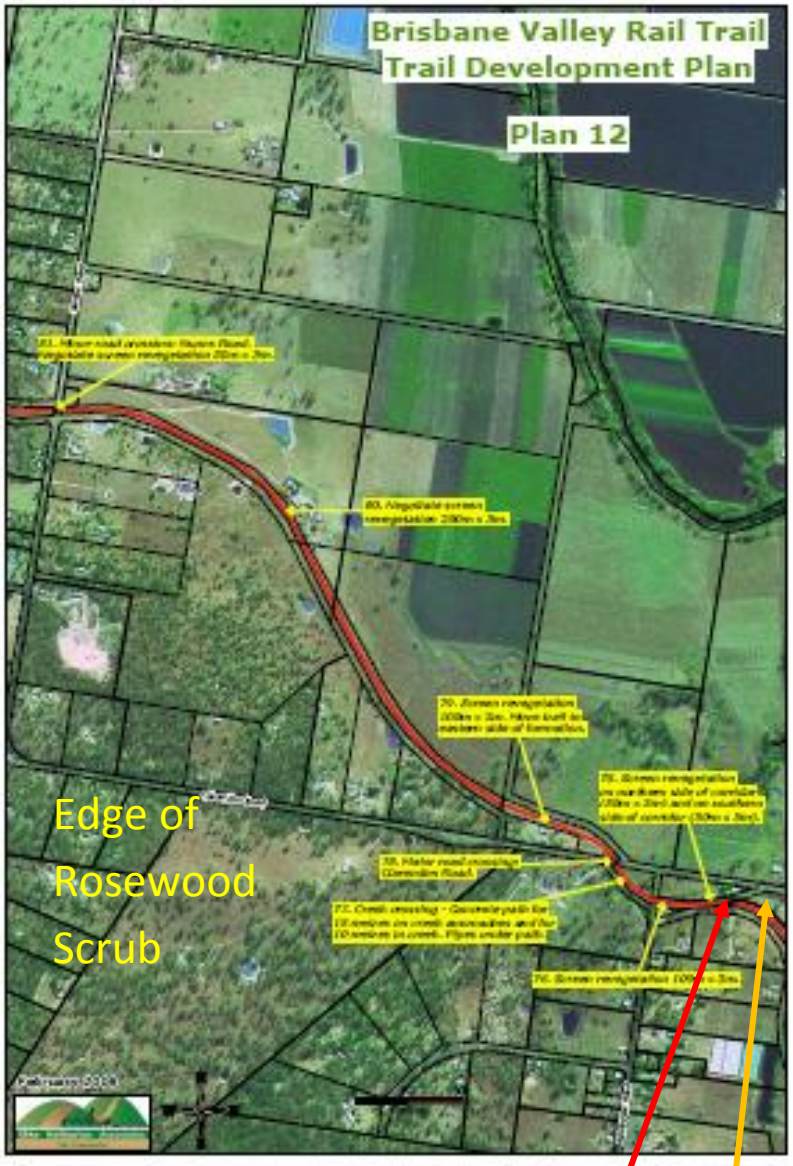
The scrub deterred early European settlement, but Aboriginal people made pathways through it and used its considerable resources for bush tucker and medicines. The Rail Trail follows the edge of the great scrub along the Brisbane River between Lowood and Fernvale.



MAP 7

8 PATHS TO THE BUNYAS

The most important aspect of Aboriginal life in southeast Queensland revolved around the socio-sacred bunya (*bon-ye*) festivals, held in the Bunya Mountains and Blackall Ranges, attracting thousands of participants. Every two or three years groups of Aboriginal people would follow the ancient pathways along the Brisbane River — one paralleled the Rail Trail at this point —to the misty pine clad mountains where towering bunya pine *Araucaria bidwilli* dropped huge cones full of rich nuts. Bunya feasts were much more than tribal gatherings: they represented a time of trade, where the Jagera could exchange prized rosewood spears called *bonoorong,* derived from a distinct variety of Brigalow *Acacia harpophylla,* in return for shell and reed ornaments, gum, seeds and weapons. Bunya trees were greatly prized and it is likely that the first conflicts between European settlers and Aboriginal people arose when timber cutters started to fell the sacred trees.



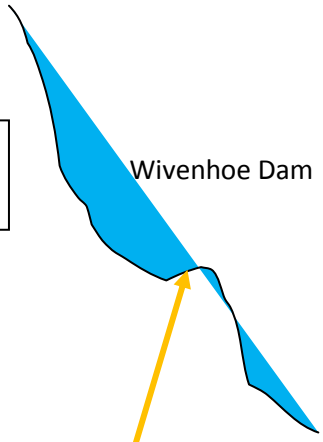
MAP 8

9 THE LOWOOD BORA GROUND

A bora ground used for initiations was located beside the Rail Trail at this point. It was probably destroyed in 1886 during construction of the railway which cut through the pathway connecting the larger public ring with the *kippa* ring. There was a report of a scarred tree that was sacred but this was also lost.

The Rosewood Scrub extended north to about this area.

Map 9



10 THE PLATYPUS MEN OF THE RIVER

The Jinibara People tell a dreaming story of two *dinderi* (little men) ancestors who travelled up the Brisbane River from Wynnum, camping along the way. On their way they encountered several *Dag:ein* (sea snakes) and killed them. They killed the *dag:ein* at Oxley, Gairnbee Rock, Buran, Caboonah and Wonga (Colinton). But at Mairwah Lagoon near Mt Stanley, the sea snakes overpowered the *dinderi* and drowned them. They floated to the surface and became the first platypus or *du:mer:ing*. The Jinibara called the Brisbane River *Mairwar,* meaning 'platypus'. The well-known pioneer Tom Petrie said its Yuggera name was *Waar-rar* and every bend and stretch of the river was known and named.

At Wivenhoe Dam, archaeologists excavated an important rockshelter high above the Brisbane River. The site dates to about 5300 bp and the Aboriginal people utilising the resources of the river caught large numbers of platypus, as well as other species of fish, turtles, birds and mammals.

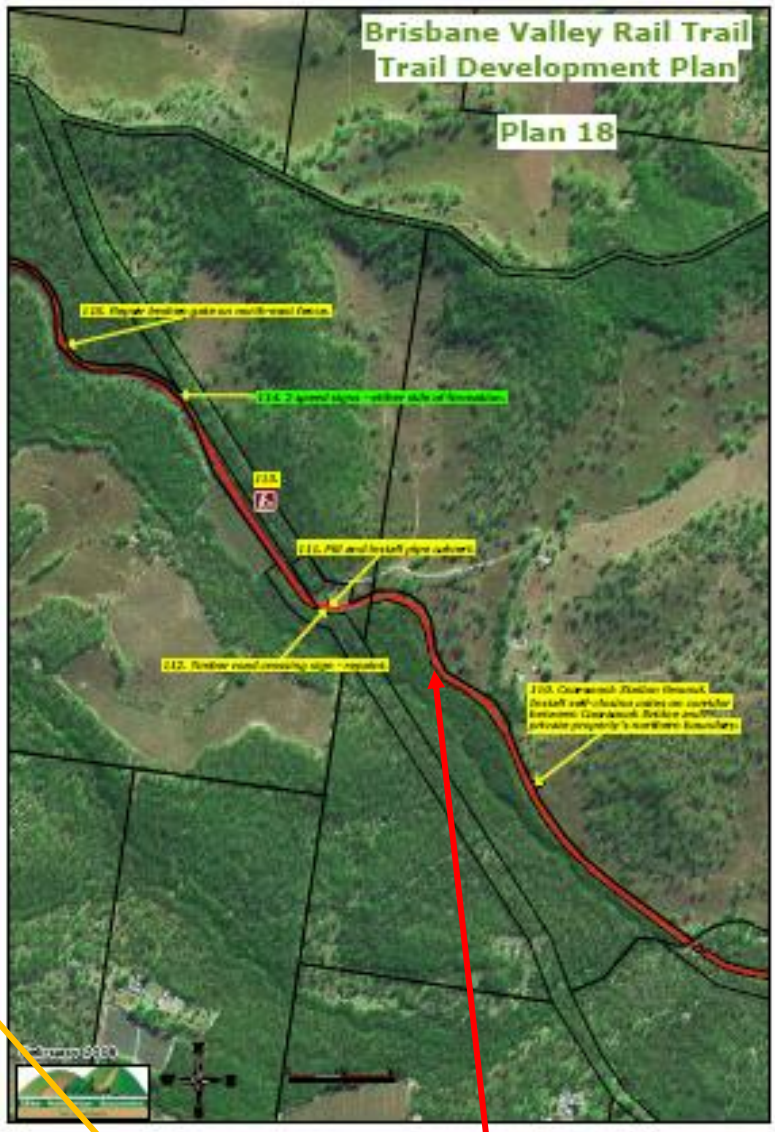
11 JUNCTION OF BUARABA AND LOCKYER CREEKS

For Aboriginal people, creeks are the arteries of life, providing renewal and life to the earth. Buaraba (the name may signify a bora or a place of dry bush) formed a pathway that led from the Brisbane River west to the Ravensbourne escarpment. Lockyer Creek bounded the Rosewood Scrub and a pathway led towards Glenore Grove where there was another initiation bora ground.

MAP 10

12 THE TARAMPA FISHER PEOPLE

The people of the Coominya and Tarampa district utilised the large shallow lakes and lagoons —Lake Clarendon, Atkinsons Lagoon, Seven Mile Lagoon and One Mile Lagoon — that dot the cultural landscape in this region. A description of a specialised fishing technique used by Aboriginal people in this area suggests that women did most of the fishing, using a woven grass wall which they would push through the water, trapping the fish. The name Coominya is possibly adapted from the Yuggera (Jagera) word *kung-i-nya* from *kung* meaning 'water', and *nya* meaning 'to see'. Several lagoons around Coominya have sadly been drained for farmland.



MAP 11

MT HALLEN

13 THE SKY MOUNTAINS

Mount Hallen is the round conical hill south of the Rail Trail past Logan Creek. A respected Jinibara elder, Gaiarbau, records that the shape of bora grounds were based on two dark holes in the Milky way, known as the Coal Sacks, believed to be where the spirits of the dead performed their ceremonies. It has been suggested that Aboriginal people regarded Mount Hallen as a dreaming site representing the large ring with Mount Mulgowie to the west where the *kippa* making took place.

MAP 12

MT ESK

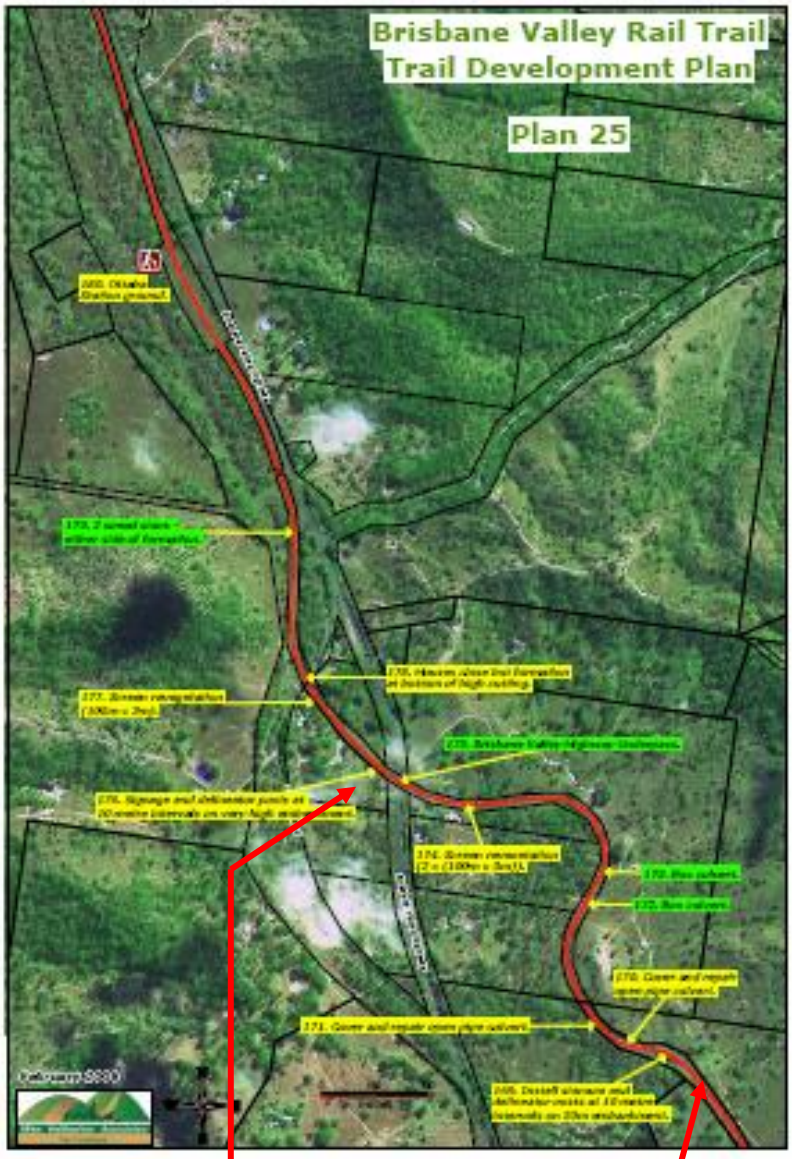
GLEN ESK

14 MOUNT ESK — GUARDIAN MOUNTAIN OF THE VALLEY

Mount Esk forms the gateway to the rich Cressbrook valley, home of the Dungibara clan of the Jinibara. Mount Esk is composed of Crossdale Rhyolite, resulting from volcanic activity during the Jurassic epoch . Aboriginal people used rhyolite — a hard, tough rock — in the manufacture of stone axes. But it is likely that the great towering mass of Mount Esk, rearing up from the Brisbane River floodplain, and cleaved by Esk Creek, had significant mythological and cultural associations relating to the Dreaming activities of ancestor spirits.

Commandant Patrick Logan named Mt Esk, 'Irwin's Range'. Cunningham ascended Mount Esk during his second exploration of the Brisbane River in July 1829:

*'We found ourselves approaching a beautiful range [**Mount Esk**] of mountainous land at N.W. consisting of lofty thinly timbered forest hills of steep acclivity, and evidently grassy to their summits. This range presented several hummocky heads or projections, commanding doubtless extensive views, and altogether collectively formed an interesting feature of the landscape.*



MAP 13

MT BEPPO

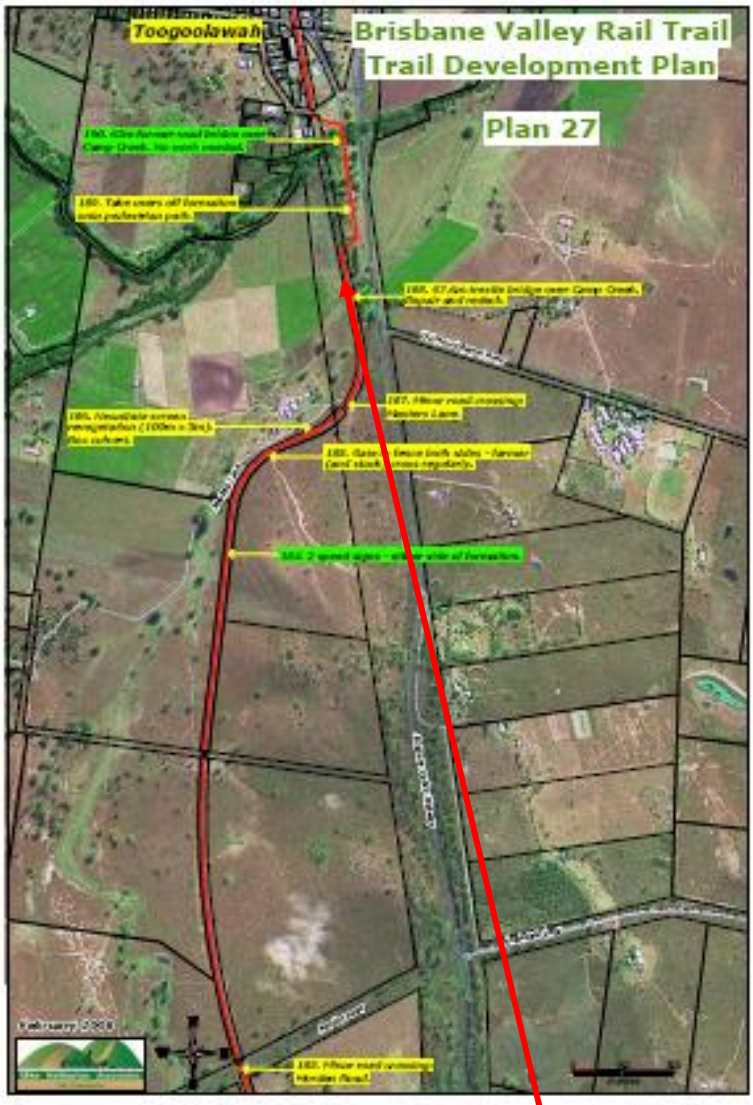
15 MT BEPPO

Mt Beppo is a low steep-sided hill to the right of the Rail Trail. It is reputedly the site of a massacre of Aboriginal people. A stone arrangement has been reported from its summit, overlooking the Brisbane River.

16 THE GAP BORA GROUNDS

Construction of the Brisbane Valley Railway between Esk and Yarraman in 1916 led to the destruction of The Gap bora ground complex below Mt Beppo. The larger public ring was on the northern side of the track and the path to the smaller *kippa* ring on the south was severed by track construction.

CRESSBROOK STATION



MAP 14

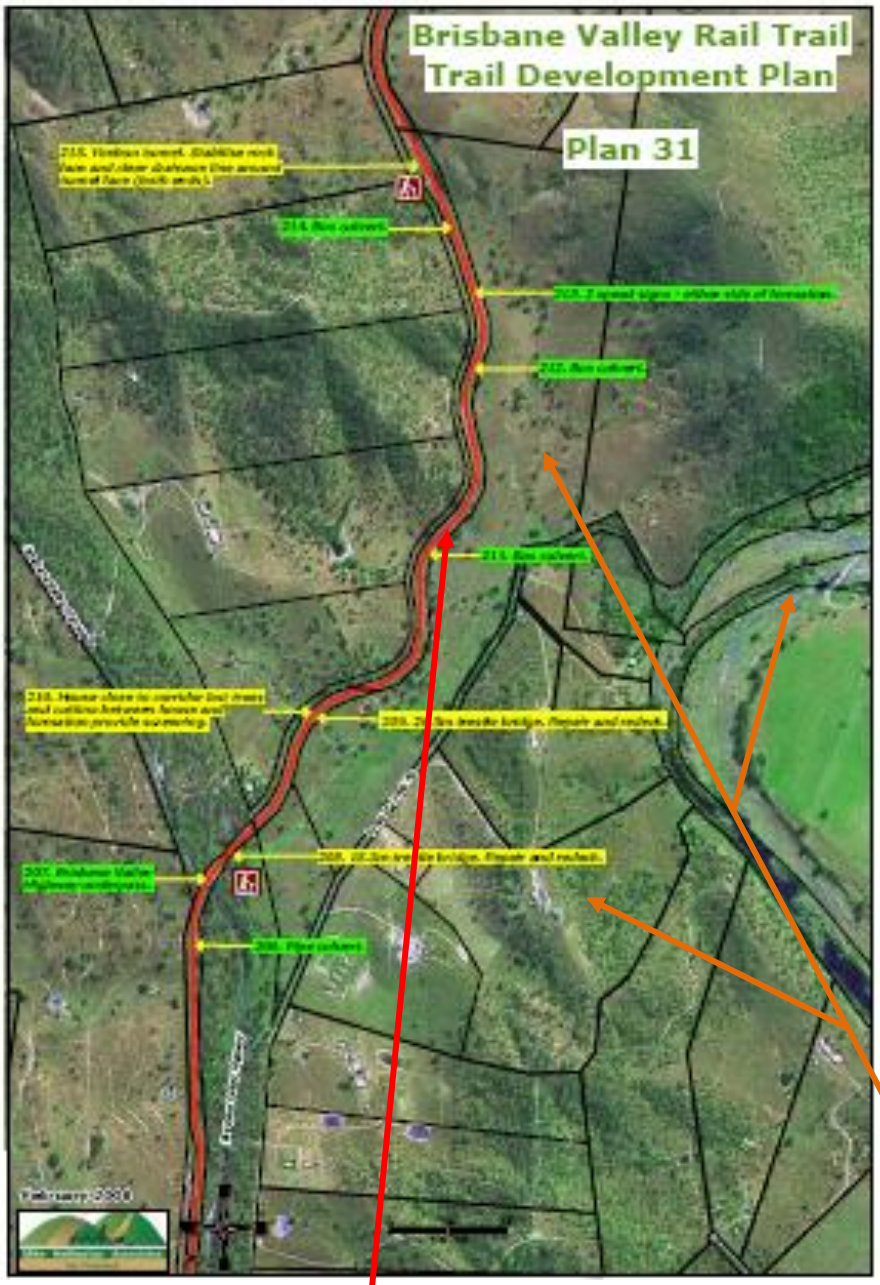
17 THE MCCONNELS OF CRESSBROOK

In 1841 when David McConnel took up a pastoral lease, 'Cressbrook' north of the confluence of the Brisbane and Stanley Rivers, the frontier was the Wild West of Australia. The gentleman squatters riding their fine horses, kept their guns ready, fearful of Aboriginal attack. The wide open grassy plains of the Cressbrook Valley , full of kangaroos, plain turkey, emus and parrots, was home to the Wakka language group Dungibara clan of the Jinibara.

Mary McConnel wrote:

> *I do not know the number of tribes (I do not think there were very many), that lived on the land that my husband took up called Cressbrook, but he set himself at once to make friends with them , and they soon got to like and trust him*.

After the murder of several shepherds following the infamous Kilcoy poisonings on the neighbouring Kilcoy Run owned by Evan and Colin McKenzie, David McConnel took two Aboriginal boys, John Bull and Bungaree, hostage and threatened to kill them if anyone on his station was harmed. He saw himself as a fair and benevolent but just landowner living in dangerous times. The McConnels adopted a young Aboriginal boy, Alpin, who travelled back to Scotland with the family.



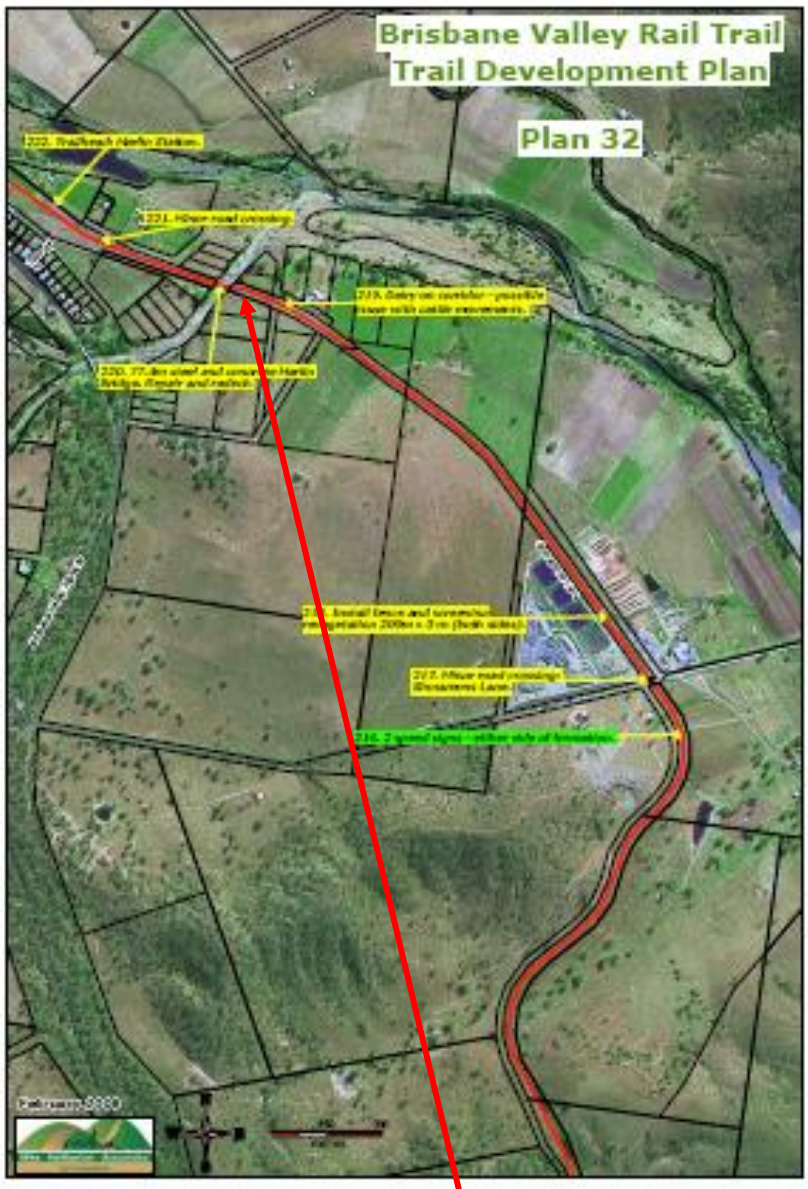
MAP 15

18 CUNNINGHAM ENCOUNTERS THE DUNGIBARA

Travelling along the Brisbane River in July 1829, north of the future Cressbrook Station, the explorer Allan Cunningham nervously noted several encounters with Dungibara people. Three young men were carrying firesticks, presumably to fire the grasslands to assist hunting. Cunningham's dogs caught a kangaroo near Gregor Creek, which the explorer shared with another Aboriginal group camped at the junction of the creek. The women had been digging up the poisonous tubers of Cunjevoi *Alocasia brisbanensis*, a staple food for the Dungibara, along with the equally poisonous Black Bean *Castonospermum australe*, called' river chestnut' by Cunningham. Both these species required extensive leaching, roasting and pounding before being edible. On his return his party came across several camps and a party of nearly 50 warriors with spears.

Cunningham wrote in his journal:

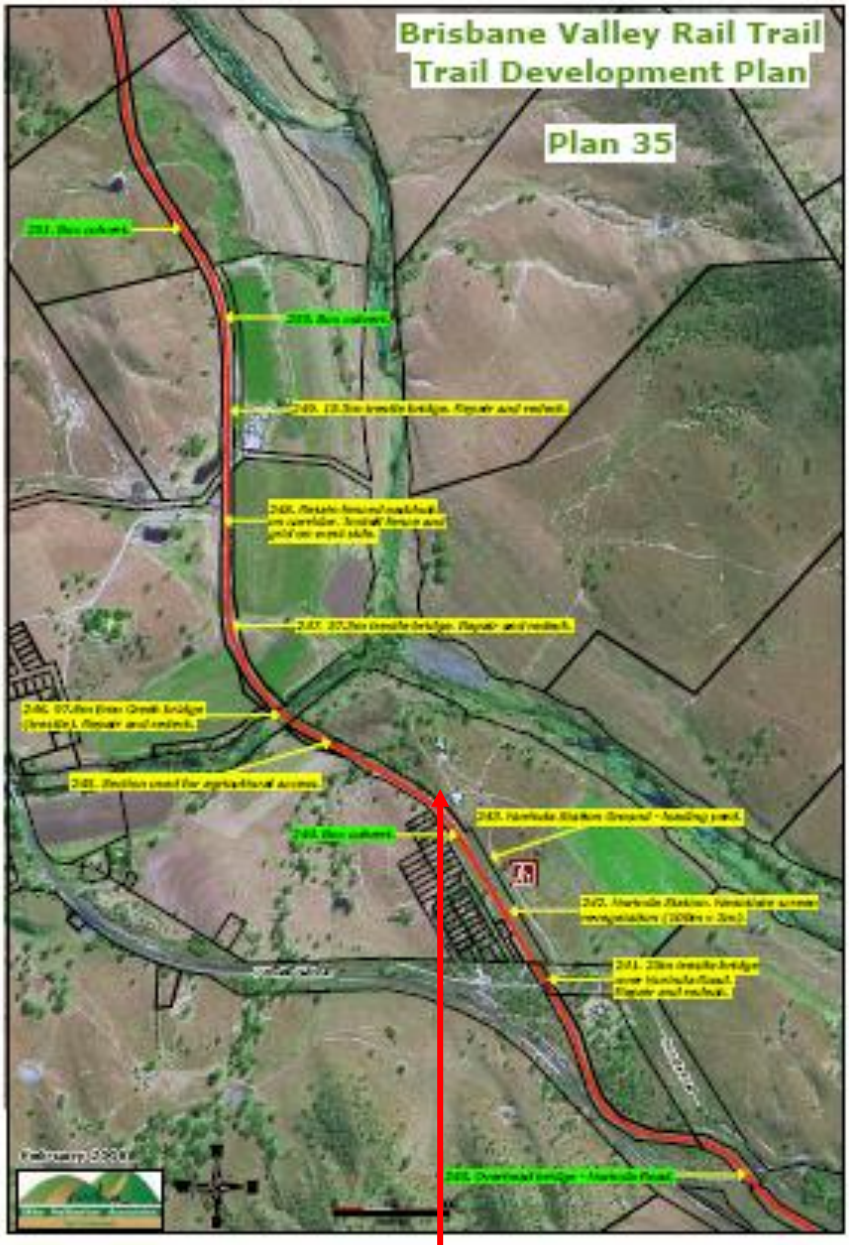
One man, with a body redden by ochre, who had a spear in his hand, threw it down and holding up a Kangaroo-skin, signified by signs his wish to communicate and barter with us. However, I had resolved to hold no communication with them on any terms, but passing through their country close to their encamping grounds, to preserve a profound silence; being at the same time fully prepared to repel, with the utmost firmness, with our arms, any attack they might be disposed to make on us.



MAP 16

19 IVORY CREEK: A SERPENT IN STONE

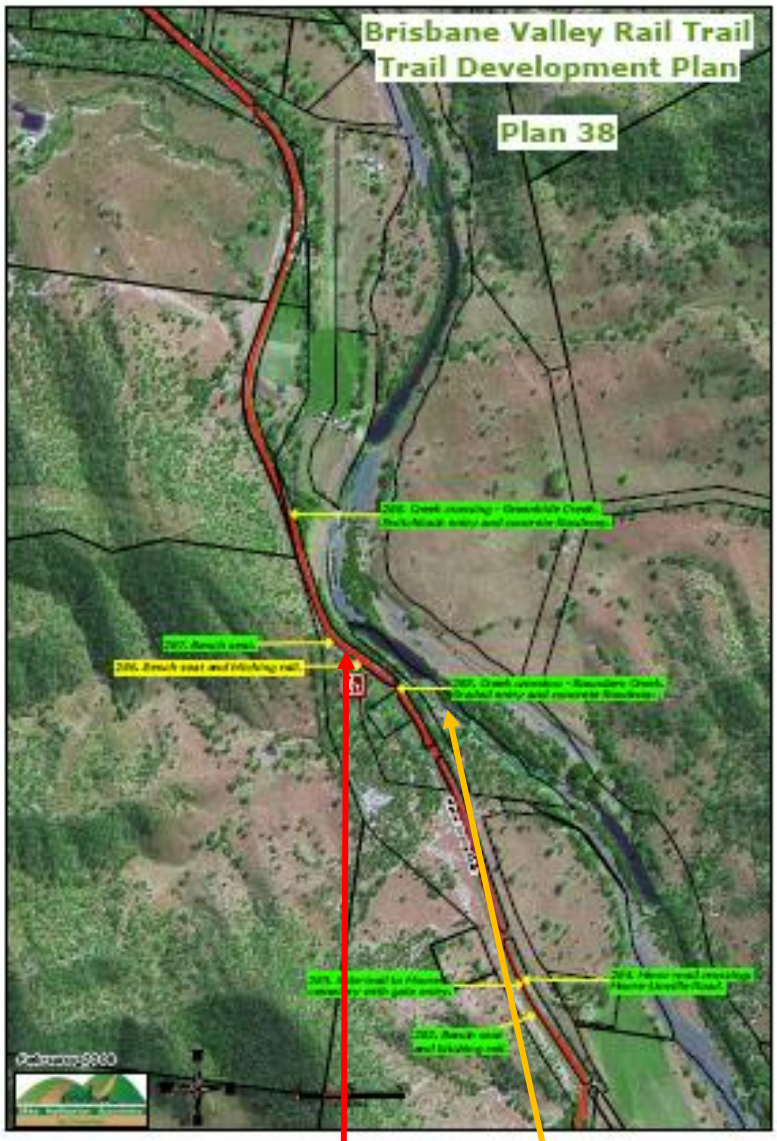
Near Ivory Creek is a remarkable stone arrangement, not visible from the Trail. It is formed of local stone, 120 metres long in a curving line, with alternating cairns of stones. It possibly represents a totemic ancestor, perhaps a rainbow serpent or carpet python, or a dreaming track representing the journey of an ancestral dreamtime figure. Its proximity to Ivory Creek suggests it might also have a ceremonial function associated with increase ceremonies connected to rain.



Map 17

20 MT NURINDA

To the west of the Rail trail is the distinctive Mount Nurinda, meaning 'emu'. Emu Creek is a very long creek that has its source to the west where the Emu Creek (whose name was not recorded) clan of the Wakka speaking Bujiebara People lived.

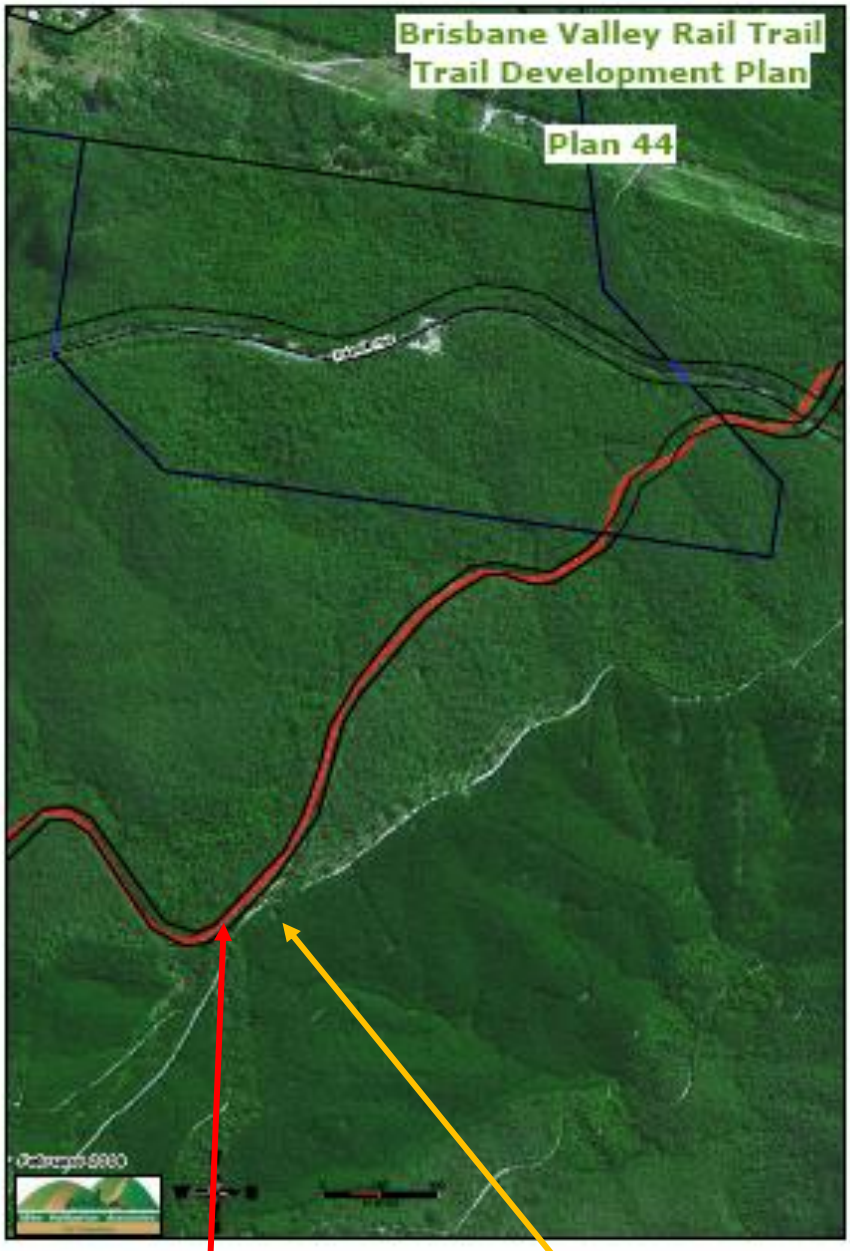


MAP 18

21 A LUXURIANT FOREST

It is through the eyes of the early explorers that we can glimpse the beauty and richness of the Brisbane Valley before the advent of white settlement began logging the forests and building roads and fences. Cunningham, about to turn back because of his emaciated bullock teams, wrote in July 1829 about this section of the Brisbane River:

> *'Crossing the dry but spacious channel of the river... we entered a thick wood matted together with vines, in which I observed the red cedar of a very large robust growth, with Figtrees, the native chestnut (Black Bean) and silk-oak (Grevillea robustus C.) of equal magnitude and gigantic stature.'*



MAP 19

22 BENARKIN BORA GROUNDS

Passing through dense Hoop Pine forest, with the tink-tink of bell miners ringing out, the Rail Trail passes about 100 metres from the Benarkin bora grounds. There are two rings linked by a 450 metre path. The path was where initiates (‘*kippas*’) were led to the smaller ring where the initiation took place. The bora grounds are located in dense sclerophyll forest on the top of the Balfour Range and amid the dark and shadowy hoop pines, as the wind blows up the ranges below, it is easy to cast aside time and hear the sound of clapsticks and the songs of the bora.