

A Brief History of Warburton and Arrabri Lodge

Arrabri Lodge school camp is located in the Upper Yarra Valley at East Warburton. The original building (which is now our dining hall) was called the 'Maroondah Guesthouse' was built in the early 1920s. The picture below shows what Arrabri Lodge looked like in the 1940s.



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MAROONDAH GUEST HOUSE, WARBURTON EAST, VIC.

Going back to before Melbourne was established the Yarra Valley was home to aborigines from the Wurundjeri tribe for many thousands of years. They continued to live in campsites on river flats and swamps for some time after European settlement.

In 1845 Robert Hoddle (an explorer looking for the source of the Yarra River) came to Warburton and created detailed maps of the region. As a result a new community of farmers came to live in the area.

The discovery of large deposits of gold in the area surrounding Warburton caused a population explosion in the mid-1850s. By the late 1890's, most of the 'easy' gold had been found and prospectors had moved on.

A timber industry took over in Warburton as gold ran out. Wagon loads of timber were taken over rough bush tracks to Lilydale, the start of the railway line at that time. In 1901 the railway was extended all the way to Warburton strengthening the growing timber industry. The timber mills provided work for all who wanted it, and towns, such as Powelltown, sprang up around some of the mills.

Today the railway line to Warburton no longer operates (it closed in 1965) but is known as the 'Warburton Trail' and is a terrific walking (bike trail) running all the way into Lilydale. Looking out your bus window on the way to Arrabri Lodge you will see the trail following parts of the Warburton Highway.

Warburton went through an era when guest houses, close to the railway line, provided accommodation for holiday makers from the city. Arrabri Lodge was one such guest house although a lot has changed since then. Bus and car parking areas replace stables for horse drawn carriages and only a small portion of the camp buildings are original. However the charm of earlier times still linger and on your journey to Arrabri it is worth thinking about what life would have been like in Warburton in the 1800s.