



breathe easy...

# Wye River Heritage Walk

## OTWAYS TRAILS

Look for the other Trail Notes in the series. Copies of these notes are downloadable from the following websites:  
[www.visitotways.com](http://www.visitotways.com)  
[www.visitapollobay.com](http://www.visitapollobay.com)  
[www.otwaycoast.com](http://www.otwaycoast.com)

Look for the Otways trails symbol in the official Otways Touring Map:



### When walking in the Otways make sure you follow these simple tips:

Sudden and extreme weather changes are common in the Otways, so carry practical all-weather clothing and remember that your mobile phone may be out of range. Always carry water, food, matches and a torch in case of emergency. Take note of signs and landmarks. Advise someone of your intended location and estimated time of return.

Respect the environment and stay on marked paths. Do not damage vegetation or disturb wildlife.

All native animals and plants are protected. No fires, including barbecues, can be lit on a day of total fire ban.



### Great Ocean Road Visitor Information Centre

100 Great Ocean Road,  
Apollo Bay, Victoria 3233  
Telephone **1300 OTWAYS**  
[gorvic@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:gorvic@colacotway.vic.gov.au)

### Colac Visitor Information Centre

Cnr. Murray and Queen Streets,  
Colac, Victoria 3250  
Telephone (03) 5231 3730  
[colacvic@colacotway.vic.gov.au](mailto:colacvic@colacotway.vic.gov.au)



# Otways Trails

## Wye River Heritage Walk

*Discover the historic township of Wye River.*

*A 90 minute easy walk*

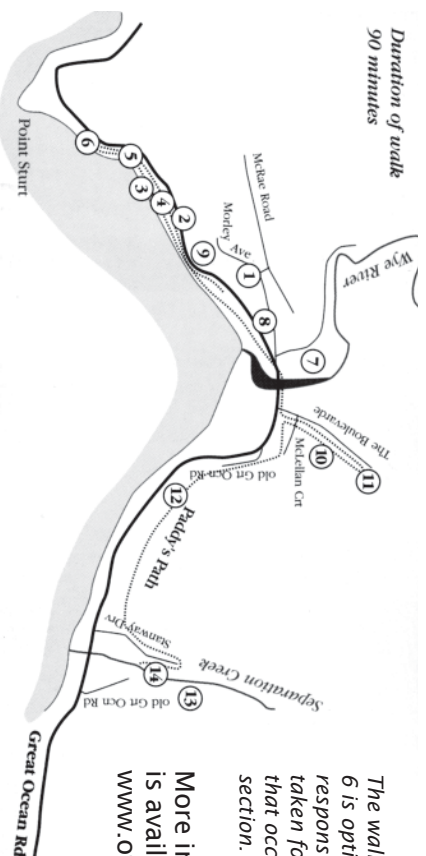
### EARLY SETTLERS

The Gadubanud people lived in the Cape Otway region till the mid 19th century. Middens along the Otway coast reveal the remains of shellfish collected by the women while the men fished. There were also ducks, eels, seals and Cape Barren Geese. A huge variety of bush foods included Warrigal Spinach, seen trailing down the cliffs. Their houses were constructed from slabs of sandstone. There are no surviving members of the Gadubanud.

The first European settlement in Wye River was made by Alexander and Donald McRae who established a fishing camp in the valley in 1882, while their cousin, Alex McLennan, made camp at Kenneth River. They cut a 6ft wide track to Forrest - 17 miles. In 1895 Edward Harrington travelled down this track to Wye River, where he selected 1000 acres in the valley to grow potatoes and onions and took out the first grazing lease. He built a homestead in the valley and later built for his brothers, John and Patrick. The Harrington selection later incorporated the McRae land, giving the Harrington family possession of most of the land in Wye River and Separation Creek. The names of these pioneers are preserved in local street names.

Wye River Heritage Trail commences at the entrance to the Wye River Foreshore Picnic Area, opposite Rookery Nook, making two loops - one towards Point Sturt, which includes rock scrambling, and one to Separation Creek. It is recommended that the walk be undertaken at low tide.

*Duration of walk  
90 minutes*



*The walk to sites 5 & 6 is optional and no responsibility will be taken for any mishap that occurs on this section.*

More information is available from [www.otwaycoast.com](http://www.otwaycoast.com)





**WYE RIVER HERITAGE TRAIL** *This brochure is available in greater detail from the Wye River General Store and Information Centres in Lorne and Apollo Bay.*

### 1 Mill Houses

Look across the Great Ocean Road from the beach at the base of steps near the BBQ. Two raw timber houses adjacent to the Rookery Nook, directly opposite, belonged to the Secretary and Foreman of the Tasmanian timber company that commenced work on Hay's Mill at Wye River in 1919.

### 2 Boiler

Walk along the beach towards the ruins of piers on the rocks near Point Sturt. Climb the access steps from Baldy's Beach, just before these rocks. The jacket of an old boiler is partly hidden by blackberries growing on the cliff, about 10m back towards Wye River.

### 3 Bluegum Pier

Return to the beach and walk along the left of the rock platform. There are two sets of ruins along here, built in 1900 and 1913. The nearest is the 1913 pier, built for the Bluegum Timber and Transport Co., which began operating from Separation Creek in 1912. Horse-drawn trams hauled timber to the existing pier, the ruins of which lie further ahead. When the firm's three-masted schooner, Leillateah, ran aground on 3rd May 1913, construction of this second pier, 500 feet long, began. It opened in September 1913. The first pier and 60 feet of the second pier with its terminal crane, were washed away in a storm in 1923.

### 4 Tramways

Remnants of the old 3ft gauge tramway, that was laid beside the coastal road, are visible among the rocks. Work undertaken for Hay's Mill included laying a tramway 2km up Wye River and a tributary, crossing and recrossing as the flats changed sides, via thirteen bridges, the longest of which led to the mill across the swampy flats at its rear. A second tramline, never used, ran for 2.4km towards Monash Gully. Remnants of tracks can still be found.

### 5 Winch

A winch, partly buried in the sand near the cliff beyond the first rocks, belonged to a boating shed, but its

engineering style dates it to the 1890s and it is believed to have originated from Harrington's Pier.

### 6 Harrington's Pier

The pioneer Harrington Brothers completed construction of the first pier in 1900, to assist settlers and encourage milling. It was 322ft long, but it was difficult for small steamers to access, and farm produce often had to be rowed out to sea or else dumped. Return along the beach and take a breather at the picnic tables on the beach opposite the General Store, which originated from a private residence. 7), 8) and 9) can be viewed from here.

### 7 Hay's Mill

In 1919, construction of the largest and most modern mill in the Otways commenced on 14ha of land at the mouth of the Wye River. With the backing of Henry Jones of IXL fame and John Hay, a Melbourne timber and shipping agent, more than £30,000 was invested in the project, which provided a complete town settlement – an innovative concept for those times. Elevators and the most modern log handling equipment were installed. Operations began in 1920, shipping sawn timber out in the company steamer, the Gundiah, but ceased in 1921, unable to justify the huge capital outlay.

### 8 Rookery Nook

The bachelors' quarters built for Hay's Mill were converted into a guest-house which later became the Rookery Nook, gaining a roadside licence in 1934. Tennis courts were originally on the present car-park. The building has been demolished twice by fire.

### 9 The Great Ocean Road

The Great Ocean Road Trust was launched in 1918, to link isolated coastal towns, offering employment to returned soldiers. In 1923 a camp was set up on the flats near the tram bridge at the rear of the mill, for the 60 workers engaged in construction of the final link between Lorne and Wye River. This section was opened in 1932 by Lt. Governor Sir William Irvine at a ceremony in Lorne, after which the vice-regal cavalcade travelled to a very festive welcome at Wye River.

### 10 Harrington Memorial Park

The entrance to the park is opposite the CFA in McLellan Crt. In 1919 this land was part of the settlement of mill workers' cottages. Follow the path up the hill to the view from the oak tree.

### 11 Wye River State School 4037

A school for children of mill workers was opened in 1920, and operated on an irregular basis in residences here near the oak tree, and across the river on the mill site, until 1942. It was lost to bushfire in 1962.

### 12 Paddy's Path

Return to the CFA, locate the Paddy's Path sign, and walk back towards Separation Creek on the seaward side of the CFA. After passing a row of houses on the Old Great Ocean Road, you will see the entrance to Paddy's Path, which roughly follows the course of the old tramway. There is an information board halfway along the path.

### 13 Scully's Mill & Bluegum Timber & Transport Co.

Turn left at the end of Paddy's Path and follow the road towards Scully's Mill Farm. This is private property, but just before its entrance, look across the creek to a tall blue gum. On this site in 1904, Charles Scully commenced the first timber mill in this area, hauling timber from Harrington's selection along the coastal tramway to Harrington's Pier. The mill operated for about two years and was reopened in 1911 by the Bluegum Timber and Transport Co., which operated successfully until 1916, when the market slumped.

### 14 Harrington Cairn

Return towards the beach. A stone cairn beside the creek near the exit from Paddy's Path stands where the road opens out to a flat space. At this point the old Great Ocean Road once crossed the creek. The cairn was erected by a resident of Separation Creek to mark the place where Paddy Harrington lived during his final years. Having once owned all the land stretching from the Wye Valley to the land behind what is now the Separation Creek settlement, he was content to pass his final years in a caravan here beside the creek.

*Return to Wye River via Paddy's Path or the beach where further remnants of tram tracks are visible among the rocks.*