

# BOREE CREEK – THEN AND NOW



Hayden Westblade, Lachlan Routley,  
Laura Urquhart, Michael Barker-Smith, Jock Ratcliffe,  
Hannah Patey and Luke Westblade

Boree Creek Public School



## *Creative Catchment Kids*

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

**[www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/](http://www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/)**

## *Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre*

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants.

**[www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)**

## *Enviro-Stories*

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

**[www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)**

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**School:** Boree Creek Public School

## *Our Culture*

In 2016, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about Aboriginal culture in their local communities. The program was generously funded by Riverina Local Land Services and the Australian government's National Landcare Programme.

Creative Catchment Kids - Our Community is part of Enviro-Stories, a Peekdesigns education program.

### **Acknowledgement**

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and thank them for sharing their knowledge and culture with us.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images and/or names of people who have since passed away.

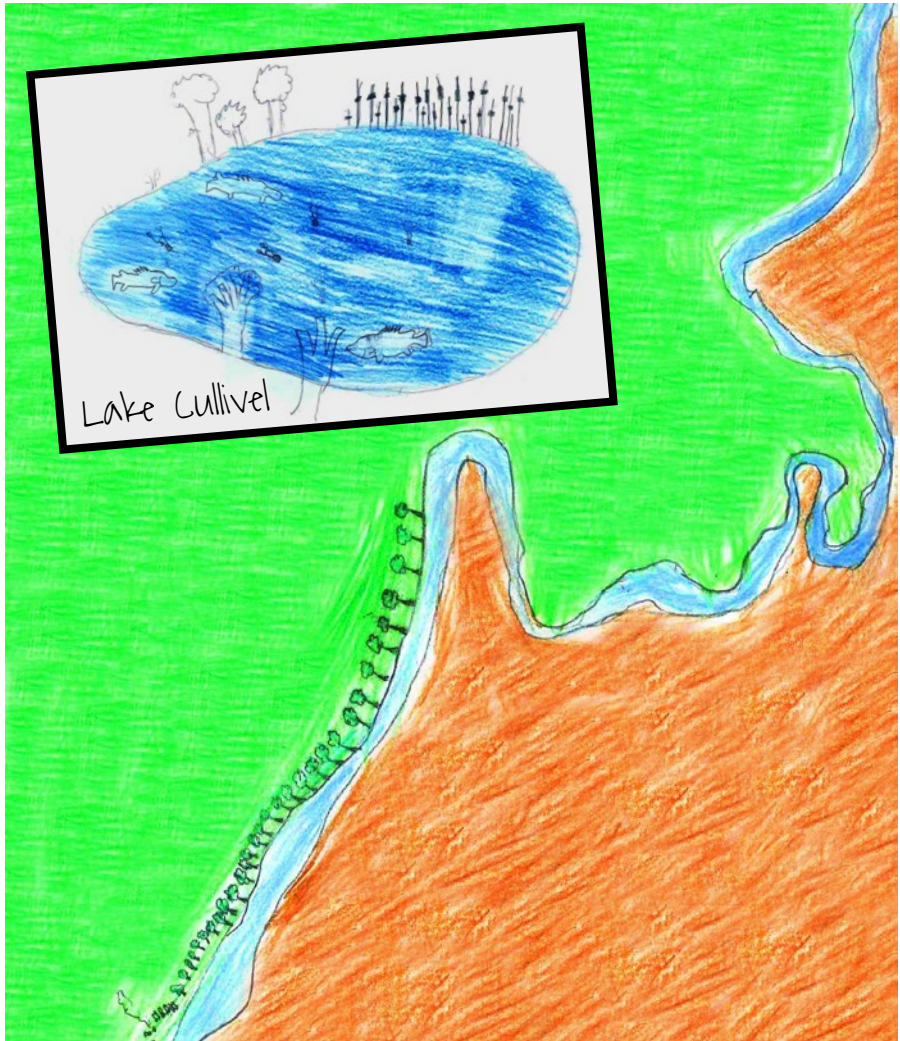




It is hard to imagine what our land in Boree Creek would have looked like before Europeans arrived when the Wiradjuri people lived here as custodians of the land.

An aerial map of Boree Creek area shows a few remnants of the land that have remained unchanged since white man arrived—the actual Boree Creek itself, Buckinbong State Forest and Lake Cullivel.





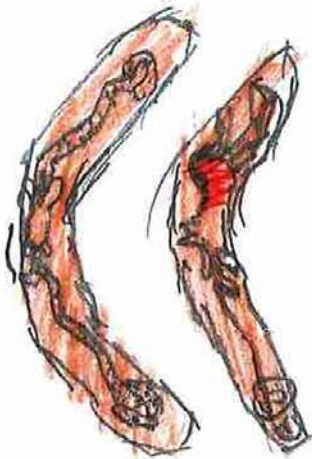
The intermittent Boree Creek, has a large catchment which boundaries the Murrumbidgee River catchment to the North, the Columbo Creek catchment to the West, the Brookong Creek catchment to the south, and the Bullenbung Creek to the East. When it flows, the Boree Creek winds its way along tall and wide River Red Gum – lined banks and out into paddocks. From there it then runs into Lake Cullivel where it collects and deepens into a broad expanse of inland water.

The Wiradjuri people used the creek for many different reasons. An obvious food source, the creek provided them with an array of native freshwater fish, yabbies, Murray crayfish, river mussels, Bardi grubs, Bardi moths, as well as edible plants such as yams, ruby red saltbush, nuts, berries and bushes. During this time, the water in the Boree Creek was much clearer, which made it easier for Aboriginal people to see and spear fish.



The creek and surrounding plains were also an attractive habitat for many native animals such as kangaroos, emus, possums, snakes and lizards, echidnas and even wombats existed in our area! All good eating in the eyes of the traditional Aboriginal tribes.

The Wiradjuri people used tools such as spears, woomeras, boomerangs and bundi sticks to help them hunt and kill these animals. Once they made a kill, the Aboriginal people used all the parts of the animal for a variety of purposes - skin, teeth, bones, spines, claws and fur were all put to good use. Everyone appreciated that they could bring food back to feed their family each day.



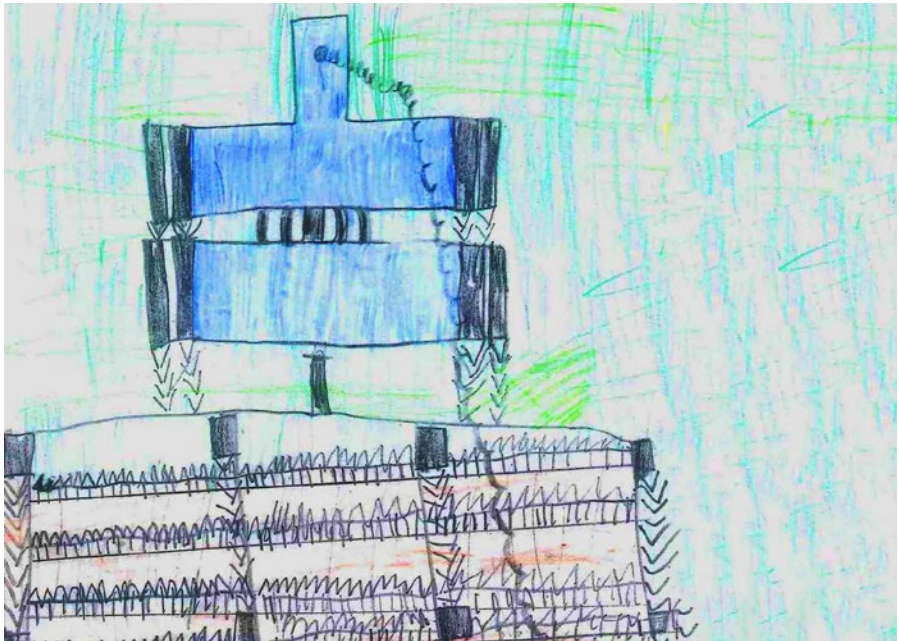


There are many areas of cultural significance in and around Boree Creek. The name 'Boree' actually came from the word "corroboree". It is said that during corroborees, the local Aboriginal people would come together in large groups to celebrate events such as birth, death, marriage and initiation ceremonies. A corroboree was an event where Aboriginal people interacted with the Dreamtime through dance, music and costume. Their bodies were painted in different ways, and they told stories and usually danced around a fire. Aboriginal people did not have books. They told their stories through animated oral story-telling, painting and carving pictures onto rocks, trees and sticks to be passed on.

Family groups traded with each other and with bordering Aboriginal Nations. Each group had something useful like shields, spears, grinding stones, spear heads, canoes or food. Sometimes they even traded land. They traded things they had a lot of and in return received things they needed. Life was simple and they had a great respect for the land.



The land around Boree Creek is now used in many, very different ways to hundreds of years ago. Most of the land has been cleared by pioneering farmers, where there were once pine and gum forests, there are now paddocks used to produce agricultural crops. In the Boree Creek area, the main crops grown are wheat, canola and barley. Lupins and peas are also grown on some farms.

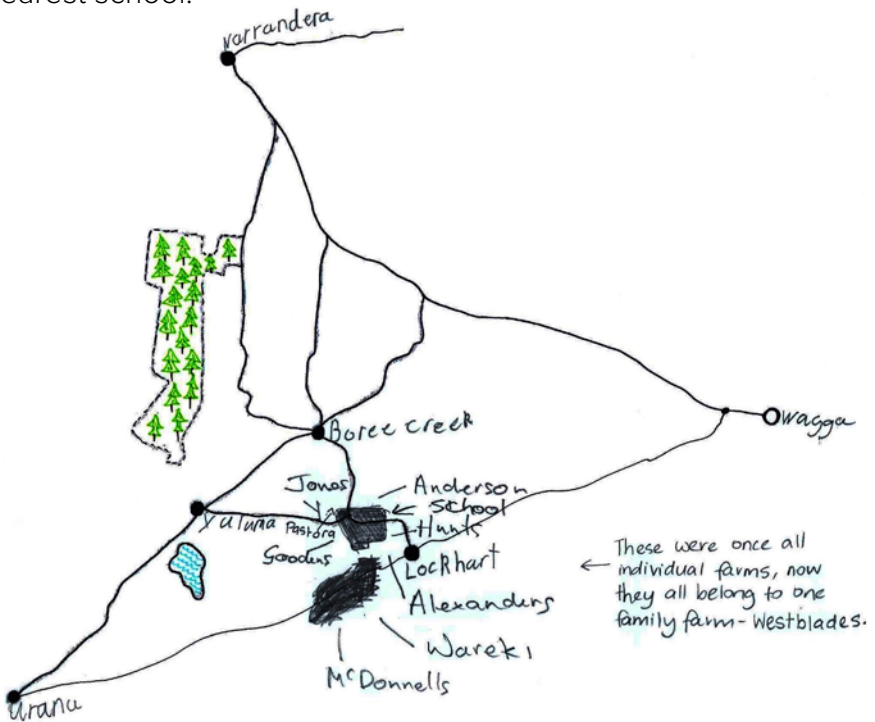


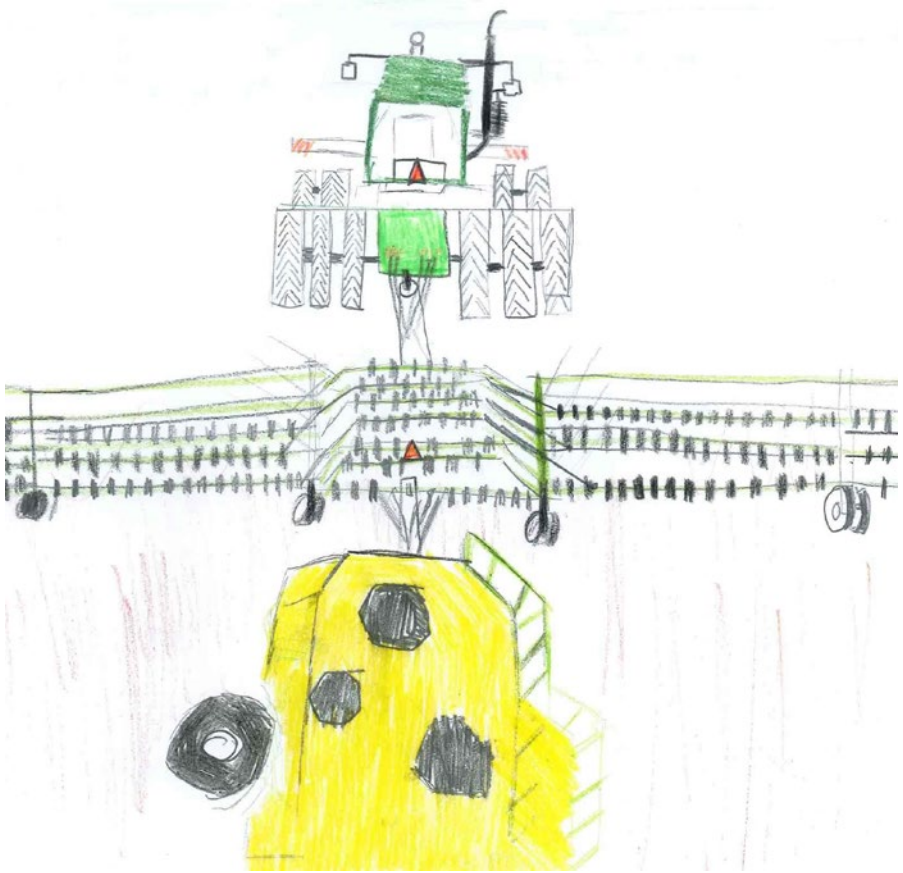
Farmers in the area also breed various types of sheep. The most common of which are Merinos, White Suffolks, Bonds and Dorpers. Some sheep are bred for wool, others are bred for meat.



Most farmers think the lifestyle is the best part about farming. They enjoy being their own boss, being free to choose what they do in their day, feeding animals and working with nature.

There have been many changes that farmers in the Boree Creek area have seen over the last century. The biggest change has been the average size increase of farms. Several small farms have been connected into one large farm. Where there were once five or six houses and families on the one farm, there is now only one active household family. Most of the farmers have lived on their farms their whole life. Almost all the farms used to have schools on them. Now those schools are closed and many of them have fallen down or been demolished. These days farmers' children have to travel many kilometres to attend their nearest school.





Old buildings have been changed for new ones. Many farms still have old buildings on them, such as houses, machinery sheds, shearing sheds and storage sheds. Most farmers have 'improved' their farms by building larger machinery sheds, new or extensions to houses, new workshops and mechanical sheds.

These days, many farmers employ workers. Some have permanent employees and others have seasonal workers who help get all the jobs done during harvest, shearing and sowing time.



Not all farms around Boree Creek are owned by local farmers, some have been bought by corporate superannuation companies. They buy the farms, employ workers to run them and make profits for their investors.

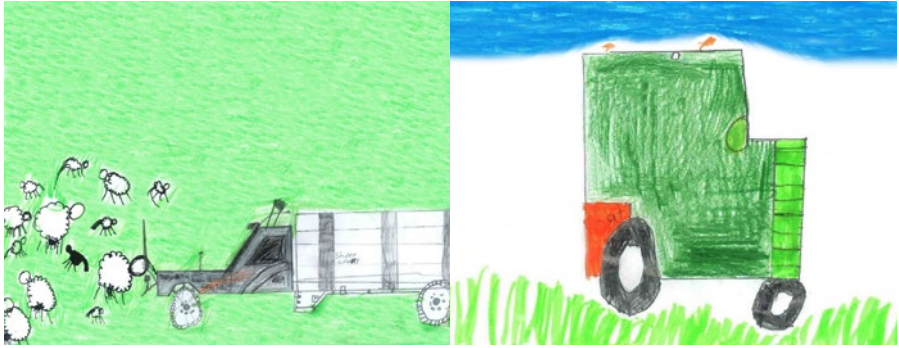
Broad scale machinery has replaced smaller, less efficient implements. Farmers today use many different types of machinery to help them do cropping, sheep work and other farming jobs. They use tractors, utes, air-seeders, trucks, headers, motor bikes, chaser bins, boom sprays, feed carts, loaders, field bins and cranes.



Through research, farmers now know a lot more about grain and how it grows. They employ agronomists to come to their farms to test soil, check the crops for bugs or weeds that may need spraying, analyse the soil sample, and tell farmers if they need to add lime, gypsum, urea or natural fertilizer.

There are many different chemicals that farmers use to spray their crops, treat their sheep, and control vermin. They include herbicides and pesticides. The farmers must wear protective clothing to keep them safe from dangerous chemicals.





Farming is a difficult but rewarding existence. The farmers have to battle the weather, hoping for rain at the right time, and sunny days during harvest. They are also faced with pests and weeds which threaten their crops and livestock. They work long hours and are faced with increasing price rises for all their inputs such as fuel and chemicals. All the local farmers we spoke with said despite this long list of challenges, they wouldn't swap what they do for any other job in the world. They get to be their own boss, spend more time with their families, and care for the most precious gift of all- their land.







L-R: Hannah Patey, Laura Urquhart, Lachlan Routley,  
 Luke Westblade, Michael Barker-Smith, Jock Ratcliffe,  
 Hayden Westblade and families

2016 Year 3-6, Boree Creek Public School

## Congratulations!

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and  
 the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the  
 National 2016 Yates Junior Landcare Team Award.

