

Walla Park – Landcare in action



Written by Eli Pitt, Jackson Barba, Libby Hucker,
Oscar Preston, Scarlet Galvin, Shiloh Smith
and Thomas Parker

St Patrick's Primary School, Holbrook



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, cooperative activities that encourage students to learn about and respond to, natural resource management and the importance of agricultural production.

wirraminna.org.au/petaurus/creative-catchment-kids/

Petaurus Education Group

Petaurus Education Group identifies, develops and delivers a range of learning and curriculum experiences, resources and initiatives for schools and community groups to connect with land, water, productive farming, sustainability and cultural issues at the local level. The group was established by Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre in late-2014 to support its operations and education activities.

wirraminna.org.au/petaurus

Holbrook Landcare

Holbrook Landcare Network (HLN) is a Not for Profit community network based in southern NSW, established in 1989. HLN is a vibrant rural organisation managing a range of agricultural and NRM projects to deliver information and support to our community, predominantly farmers. HLN supports farmers to achieve environmental care and improved management; the adoption of sustainable and productive agricultural practices and the support of innovation.

HLN achieves this in 3 key ways:

- Knowledge transfer – education
- Facilitator for engagement leading to practice and cultural change
- Broker for funding and knowledge, for on-ground environmental works and Research and Development

holbrooklandcare.org.au

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.

envirostories.com.au

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Teacher support: Mr. John Carey

Technical support: Paula Sheehan, Holbrook Landcare

Acknowledgements: The Stage 3 class from St Patrick’s Primary School, Holbrook, along with their teacher Mr John Carey and Holbrook Landcare Network, would like to thank Ashley Paech for giving so much of his time and experience to us. We especially enjoyed his classroom visit and farm visit.

Landcare in action

In 2018, St Patrick’s Primary School, Holbrook were involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program delivered by Petaurus Education Group Inc. Creative Catchment Kids is partnered with Enviro-Stories, a Peekdesigns education program.

This project is supported by Holbrook Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program Small Environmental Grants.





(SOURCE: ASHLEY PAECH)

Ashley Paech and his family

Ashley Paech has three children Amelie, Harvey and Toby. His wife's name is Sheena. Generations of Ashley's family have been on his farm, "Walla Park" for 100 years. The farm was once part of a larger holding called Walla Walla Station.

He went to Billabong High School before attending Latrobe University where he studied Agricultural Science and Business.

Ashley used to play football for Walla Football Netball club.



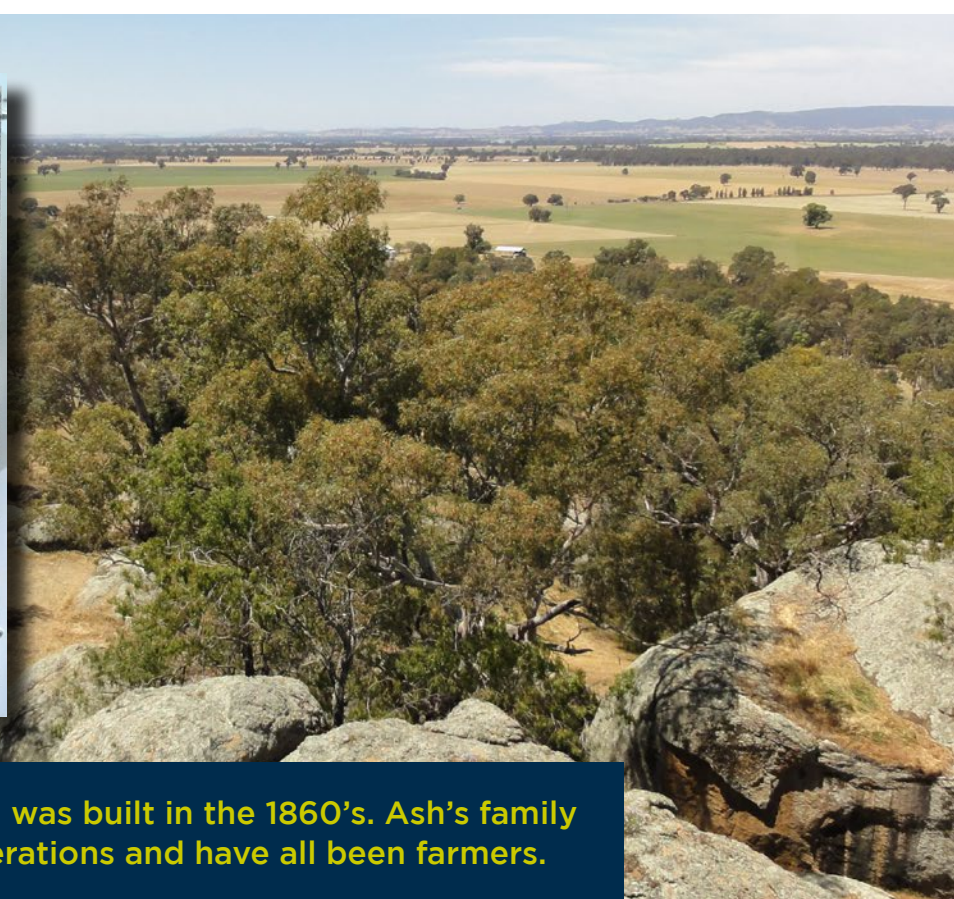
(SOURCE: ASHLEY PAECH)



Walla homestead

Ashley and his family live in the original Walla Walla Station homestead. The homestead is over one hundred and fifty years old and is still standing to this very day. The farm is now known as Walla Park.

Ashley does cropping such as wheat, canola and oats. He also has sheep on his farm that he uses for wool and meat. Ashley's sheep are crossbreds and merinos.

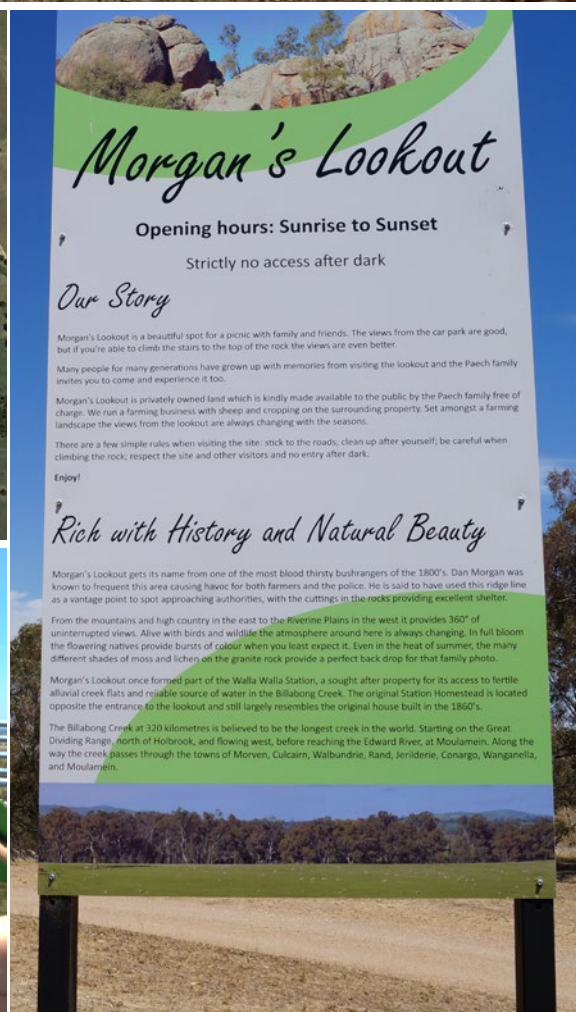
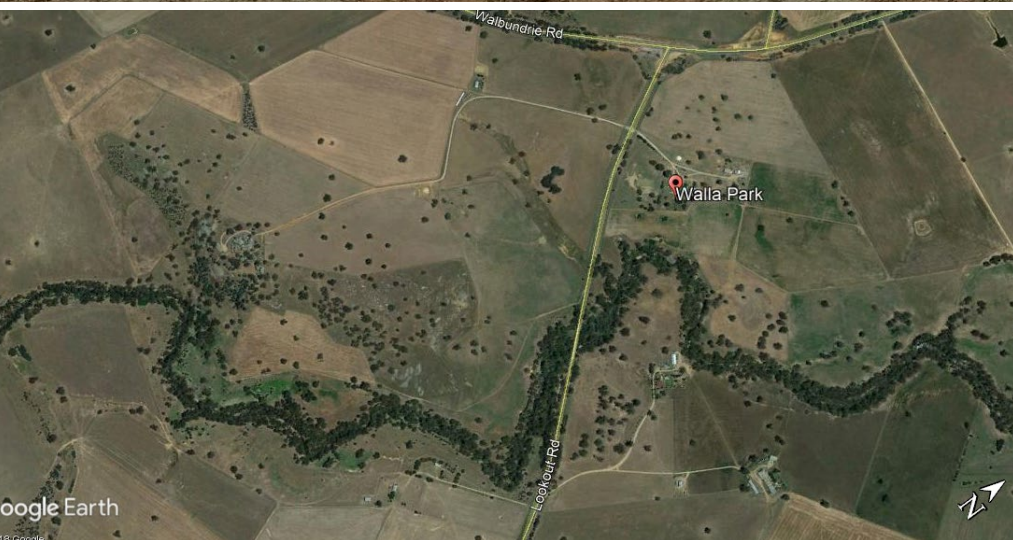


FAST FACT: Walla homestead was built in the 1860's. Ash's family has lived there for five generations and have all been farmers.

Where is Walla Park?

Walla Park is located near the towns of Walla Walla and Culcairn in southern NSW. It is bordered along one side by Billabong Creek.

It is home to Morgan's Lookout, a natural outcrop of rocks that is fenced off from the paddocks for wildlife and biodiversity protection. The Paech family allow public access to the lookout. It is an example of private-shared access, or public access to private property. Today Morgan's Lookout is a popular spot for a picnic and nature walk. Information signs, walking tracks, viewing platform and stairs have been upgraded this year. There is a spectacular 360 degree view of the surrounding countryside from the lookout on top of the boulders.



Landcare at Walla Park

Ashley is the president of Culcairn Landcare Group and is a member of Holbrook Landcare Network and the Albury Wodonga Grasslands Society. He enjoys sharing his landcare and farming experience and learning new innovative ways to farm and look after the land. Ash also looks after the farm and the Billabong Creek catchment area so that many generations to come can live and enjoy farming into the future.

The Paech family use many sustainable agriculture and landcare principles in their farm business like soil sampling, hay and silage testing, fencing stock out of creeks, using water troughs, paddock tree retention, protecting native grasses, recharge/discharge plantings, native plant revegetation and woodland conservation.



(SOURCE: ASHLEY PAECH)



Recharge - Discharge zone

20 years ago Ash's parents put a landcare inspired tree planting in a recharge and discharge zone on their land.

A recharge and discharge zone is when rain falls on the hill and goes in through the ground (recharge), then rises out of the ground at a lower place and becomes a wetland or soak (discharge). Their discharge zone is now a triangular shape of about 50 trees fenced-out from grazing.

They put a recharge and discharge planting in so it absorbs the water and provides shade for stock.





Fencing the Billabong Creek

The Paechs fenced out the Billabong Creek that is in the property 15 years ago. He has done this to protect the creek and so that he can control livestock grazing. Without fencing, livestock can chew on new sprouts, preventing them from growing, or break the banks of the creek with their hooves. Ash said fencing the creek was one of the best decisions they made for their farm. He can now control when livestock graze the creek bank.

The river red gum trees and native grasses are now growing back and the old trees with hollows are protected. Hollows and old trees are important habitat for native animals like squirrel gliders, parrots, owls, bats, goannas and possums.

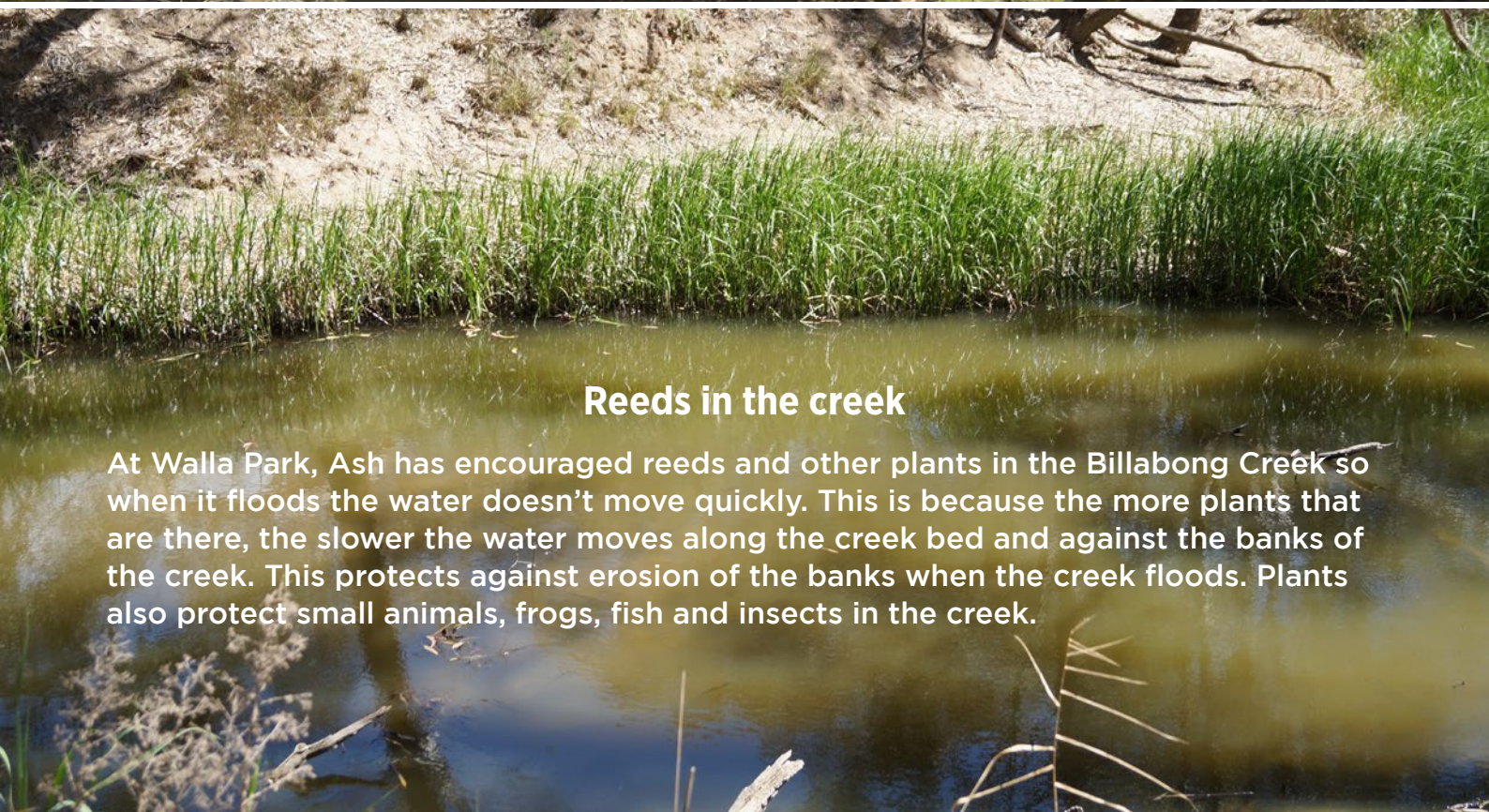


Billabong life

In the Billabong Creek at Walla Park there are yellowbelly, Murray cod, carp, frogs, and turtles along with insects and birds. Billabong Creek is a center for life. It is a water hole, a swimming spot and a place that is home to many animals that are both prey and predators.

Billabong Creek is also a great place to relax and enjoy. It is the biggest inland creek in Australia and the southern hemisphere.





Reeds in the creek

At Walla Park, Ash has encouraged reeds and other plants in the Billabong Creek so when it floods the water doesn't move quickly. This is because the more plants that are there, the slower the water moves along the creek bed and against the banks of the creek. This protects against erosion of the banks when the creek floods. Plants also protect small animals, frogs, fish and insects in the creek.



(SOURCE: ASHLEY PAECH)



(SOURCE: ASHLEY PAECH)



Cropping

Cropping is vital to our survival as human beings as it creates food and produce. Ash grows oats to feed his sheep, and canola and wheat. Sometimes he has to keep it all because there is no feed in the paddocks during times of drought. At the moment (2018) we are in drought. Luckily the Billabong Creek means there is water for his sheep and for the native animals.

Walla Park makes silage to feed stock

Silage is usually made from grass crops, including maize, sorghum or other cereals. It is using the entire green plant not just the grain. Silage can be made from many field crops, and special terms may be used depending on type. For example oatlage for oats, haylage for lucerne. This year Ash cut his canola crop for silage.

Silage is made by one or more of the following methods: placing cut green vegetation in a silo or pit; or like Ash did this year, piling the vegetation in a large heap and compressing it down so as to purge as much oxygen as possible, then covering it with a plastic sheet and leaving it to ferment for at least six weeks.





BY OSCAR PRESTON

Pest control

The most common pests that Ashley has that affects his farm are foxes, rabbits, mice and rats.

Foxes would be a threat to Ashley's sheep and lambs because they can hurt and kill many of them. They also kill birds, fish and many other animals. Foxes are a pest but they also kill Ashley's other pests such as rabbits and mice.

Rabbits destroy farmland by burrowing and creating warrens which leads to soil erosion and loss of ground cover. They also eat your canola, wheat and oats. Mice can also destroy crops and become a household pest to Ashley's family. Mice and rats can also spread diseases as well as destroy your crops.

Ashley has to plan ahead so that these pest animals are kept under control.



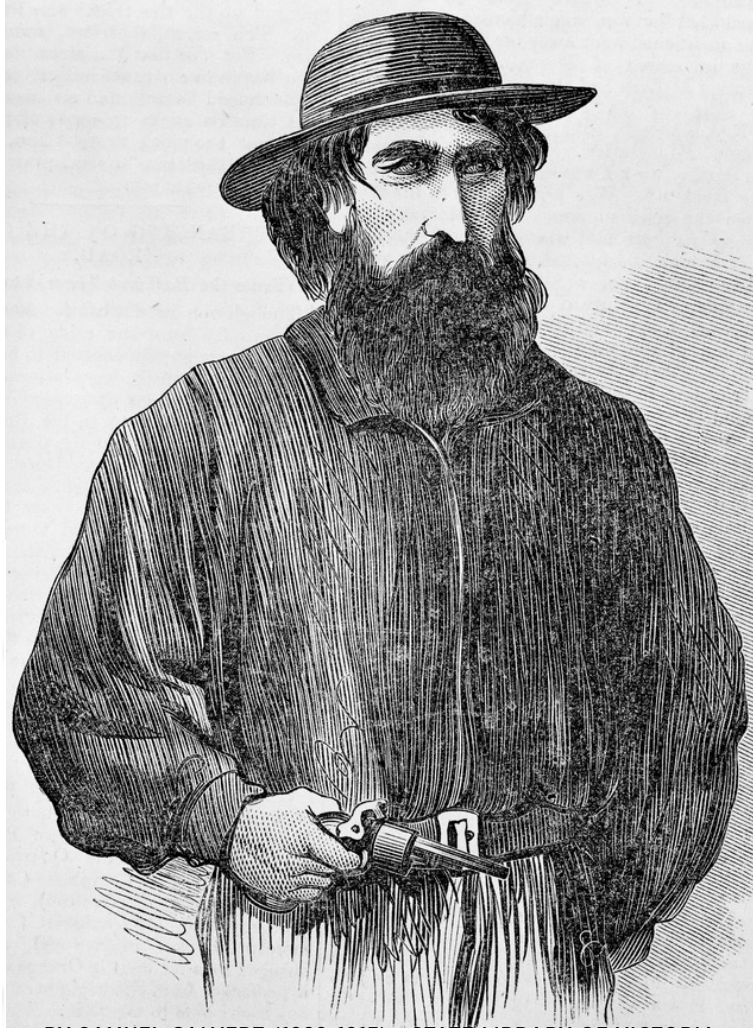
Weeds

Weed control is important on a farm. Ash has poisoned the thistles and blackberry bushes that were beginning to grow on his property. He sprayed them so they couldn't spread over the whole farm. Weeds like blackberries and thistles compete with native grasses, pasture and some native flora and change the natural balance of the local environment.



Morgan's Lookout

Morgan's Lookout is part of Walla Park. It is named after Dan Morgan, born John Fuller, who was an Australian bushranger. He got the nickname 'Mad Dog' because he was known for his 'mad' behaviour, violent mood swings and was a bloodthirsty bushranger.



BY SAMUEL CALVERT (1828-1913) - STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA





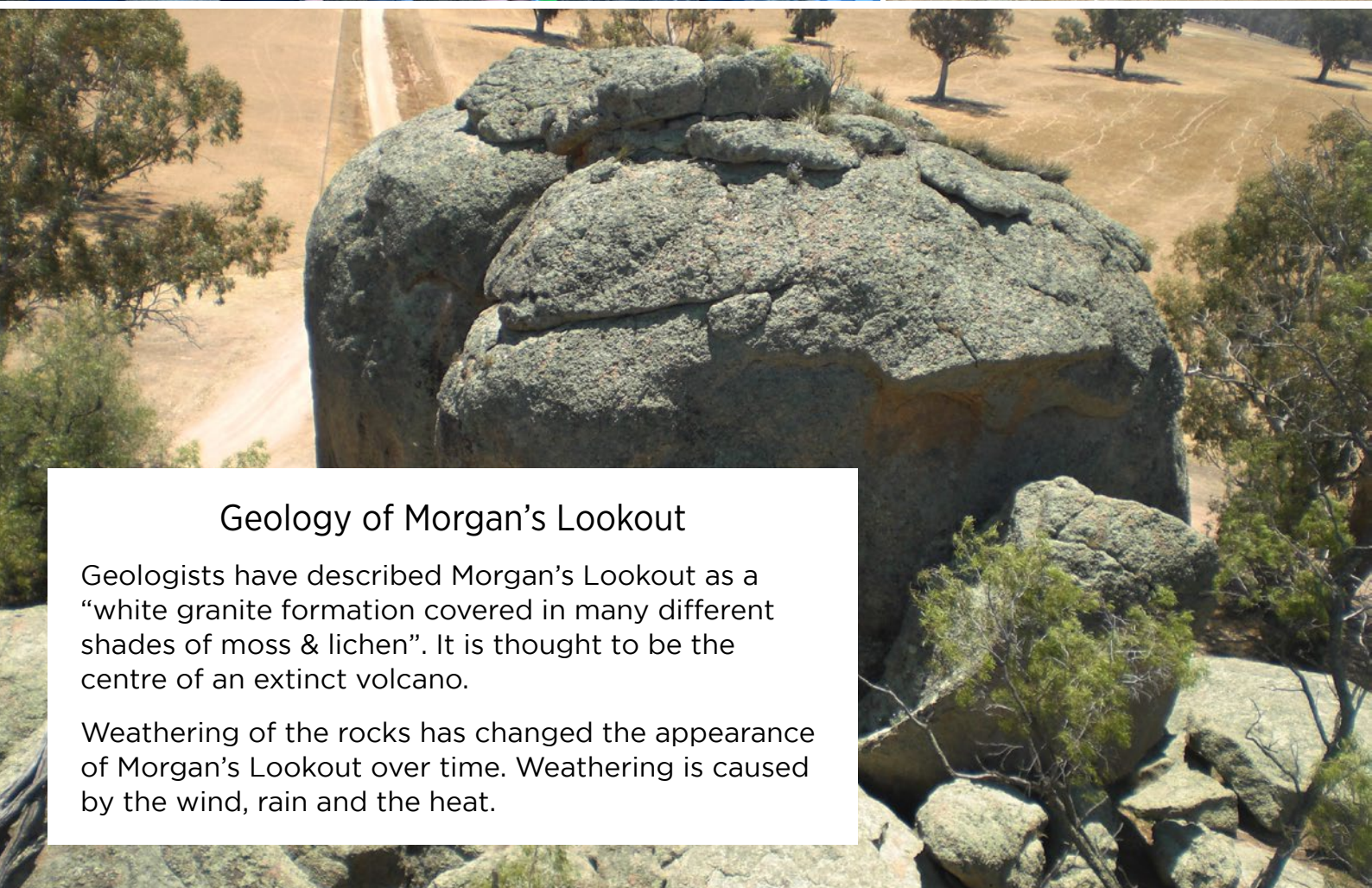
The reason it's called Morgan's Lookout is because Dan Morgan used to hide out there and he could see people coming from a long way off. He would rob people and have time to escape if he saw any troopers coming to get him.

He killed a trooper in July 1864. The government put a bounty on Dan Morgan's head and he was shot and killed on the 9th April 1865 in Victoria.

You can visit the memorial of two local victims of the bushranger, the John McLean Memorial in Culcairn and the Sgt Smyth Memorial in Henty.



(SOURCE: ASHLEY PAECH)



Geology of Morgan's Lookout

Geologists have described Morgan's Lookout as a "white granite formation covered in many different shades of moss & lichen". It is thought to be the centre of an extinct volcano.

Weathering of the rocks has changed the appearance of Morgan's Lookout over time. Weathering is caused by the wind, rain and the heat.



LIZARD



CYPRESS PINE ON GRANITE COUNTRY
(CREDIT: PAULA SHEEHAN)



EUCALYPTS ON GRANITE COUNTRY
(CREDIT: PAULA SHEEHAN)



ISOTOMES



SPIDER

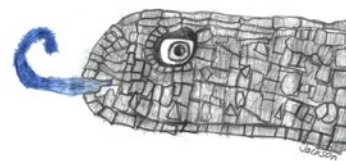


RIVER RED GUMS AT BILLABONG CREEK

Flora and fauna

Walla Walla, the closest town to Morgan's Lookout and Walla Park, is a Wiradjuri word, meaning place of many rocks, or rocks overlooking the water.

There are many native plants, birds, reptiles, insects and animals that can be found at Walla Park. For example, the lookout is a cypress pine and box woodland, whereas Billabong Creek is mostly box-gum woodland and river red gums.





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Libby Hucker, Eli Pitt and Jackson Barba

2018 Year 5-6 St Patrick's Primary School, Holbrook

*We acknowledge the Wiradjuri people as the traditional
custodians of the country on which our school stands*



National
Landcare
Program

