

**MOUNT ALEXANDER
- LEANGANOOK -
WALKING TRACKS**



- sealed road, formed gravel road, unformed track ————
- Goldfields Track, channel - - - - -
- walking track: major, minor, indistinct - - - - -
- timbered, quarry site and infra-structure, dam [Symbol]
- koala fence, koala fence posts only, stone fence [Symbol]
- creek, contour (interval 10 m) [Symbol]
- locked gate, lookout [Symbol]

Scale ~ 1:18,000 @ A3 Grid 1 km Datum WGS 84 Zone 55H
 HVHTC, harcourt.vic.au CCM, cartography.id.au
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General

Mount Alexander is approximately 125 km north-west of Melbourne. It rises 350 metres above the surrounding area and provides a rich purple background to the fertile Harcourt valley below. The mountain stands at a level of 744 metres above sea level. (By comparison Mount Dandenong is 633 metres.) The underlying rock is granodiorite. Most of the mountain is included within the boundaries of the Mount Alexander Regional Park. Non-perennial creeks that rise on the mountain include Forest Creek, Picnic Gully Creek, Eyre Creek, Axe Creek, Myrtle Creek and Whiskey Gully Creek. The mountain, known as Lanjanuc to the Jaara Jaara/Dja Dja Wurrung people, was the location of a sacred ceremonial ground and used as an outlook.

Flora & Fauna

The regional park is home to many types of eucalypts including manna gums with their distinctive smooth textures and hanging ribbons of bark, messmate, long-leaved box and yellow box. Other examples of flora are acacias, native grasses, herbs and wildflowers such as austral cranesbill, ferns and mosses. The fauna includes koalas, eastern grey kangaroos, black wallabies, echidnas, the rare tuan or brush-tailed phascogale, sugar gliders, brushtail and ringtail possums, snakes, lizards, frogs, owls, eagles, cockatoos, rosellas, parrots and altitudinal migratory currawongs and robins. Plentiful hollows in the old trees for nesting and dead wood on the ground for shelter make Mount Alexander an excellent native animal habitat. A Koala Park was established in 1943. The park was stocked with koalas from Phillip Island and managed by a committee of local residents. This park was later relocated and enlarged. It was abandoned in 2009. Leanganook picnic facilities are located near the entrance to the former Koala Park. Mount Alexander hosts a unique member of the Brassicaceae family called Southern Shepherd's Purse (*Ballantinia antipoda*). This tiny plant grows in small patches of moss on granite outcrops in damp locations. *Ballantinia antipoda* has become extinct in all other documented sites in Victoria. The plant is nationally recognised as a threatened species.

Facilities & Recreation

Mount Alexander has many recreational walking tracks, ranging in degree of difficulty from the easy to the challenging. Picnic, barbeque, camping and toilet facilities are to be found at Leanganook picnic area at the south-end of the mount. Picnic and barbeque facilities are to be found at the Oak Forest. The nearest RV dump site is located at Bridge Street Harcourt. Orienteering and abseiling opportunities abound. Cyclists find the mountain to be a rewarding challenge. The quiet peaceful environment is all-encompassing.

The Explorers

When Major Thomas Mitchell was surveyor general of New South Wales he mounted an exploring expedition into what he later described as "Australia Felix". From a long way off he set his north-east course by reference to this mountain, this friendly hill, and on 28 September 1836 with an aboriginal named Tommy, "rode with ease to the summit, and found it to be but thinly wooded so that I could take my angles around the horizon without difficulty." He named it Mount Byng after John Byng, 1st Earl of Strafford, a Field Marshal during the Peninsular War, but soon changed it to honour Alexander the Great, emperor of ancient Macedonia. Overlander Edward John Eyre camped on the north-west slopes of Mt Alexander on 8th February 1838 having become bushed in the vicinity of Mt Alexander on a five-month-long journey from Goulburn to Adelaide with a mob of cattle.



The Oak Forest

In the late years of the nineteenth century the proprietor of a tannery led a long campaign to promote planting of the Valonia Oak in order to secure the supply of tan for his Tannery at the Castlemaine suburb of Winters Flat. In August 1900 the Lands Department planted the oaks, together with a variety of other species, Ash Trees and Atlas Cedars being the most successful.

By 1912 it was realised that the Valonia Oaks would not successfully establish here as the drainage is inadequate. Other varieties of oak were more successful, among them the Holly Oak, Cork Oak, English Oak, Algerian Oak and Bristle Tipped Oak. The Oak Forest is significant as a community recreation area. It has been used as a venue for films, picnics and concerts. In 1910 the first plantation of *Pinus insignis* (or *Pinus radiata*) was established south of the Oak Forest. Strong demand by Harcourt Fruit Growers led to the subsequent expansion of the plantation to provide wood for packing cases. These plantations were harvested for the final time following the leasing of the plantation areas to Hancock Victorian Plantations. The area occupied by the pine trees has been revegetated with native species and is to be a recreation park for mountain bike events, horse riders and walkers.

Transmission Facilities

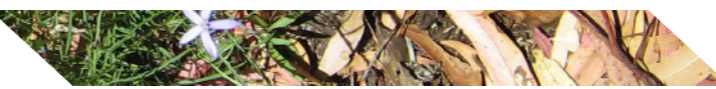
The mountain has a number of transmission sites. The transmission towers are among the tallest structures in Victoria. The Win TV transmitter was built in 1961. The national broadcaster ABC TV built a repeat/transmitter tower in 1963. That mast was dismantled after being replaced in 1992 by a 157 metre high structure on top of which is installed a UHF TV antenna. Other masts are the PMG (Telecom) repeater station, built in 1959, a mobile-phone master-transmitter, antennae for Community Radio, Victoria Police and the Taxi services.

Lookouts

Lang's Lookout commemorates the efforts of James H Lang, to have a tourist road constructed across the top of the range. In 1928, Lt-Col. Lang, in his Buick piloted by Alan Lang, and Cr J R Duggan in his Chevrolet, accompanied by the Hon H S W Lawson, proceeded across the mount in a zig-zag fashion to prove that such a road was feasible. The road thus pioneered is now known as Joseph Young Drive, in honour of a long-serving Metcalfe Shire councillor. A large outcrop of granite boulders on the western slopes of Mount Alexander is known as Dog Rocks. The manager of Sutton Grange Station, Lockhart Morton, named these rocks in 1846 because they were the favourite lair of packs of dingoes. This is now a popular abseiling site. Shepherd's Flat Lookout also attained its name in the pastoral, pre-gold rush era. Mountain-top lookouts provide splendid views of the surrounding country-side; the grazing properties of Sutton Grange and the vineyards and orchards of Harcourt. Mount Ida at Heathcote, Mount Macedon to the south and the Pyrenees ranges to the west can be seen.

Trigonometric Station

In the days before Global Satellite Positioning the distinct features of each region were used for the accurate surveying of land. The summit of Mt Alexander is an ideal spot to commence a survey. A survey mound was here in 1867, consisting of a "flagstaff in the centre of a pile of stones." The solid granite cairn was built in 1876. A socket in the



A Boer War Memorial?

Local residents casually referred to the summit cairn as a Boer War Memorial. People with a precise interest in history will have noted that the cairn was constructed over twenty years before the Boer War. However, there is value in the oral history as it fixes this as the site of the district celebrations for the relief of Mafeking. The Mount Alexander Mail reported "inspired by a right spirit the young men of the district have arranged to commence next Friday to prepare a huge bonfire on the summit of Mount Alexander." Twenty men spent four days, to build the pile, reckoned to be the largest in the Colony. On June 6th 1900 the bonfire was lit in the presence of a large number of locals and was visible for a very great distance.

Sericulture Ruins

The site of the Mount Alexander Silkworm Farm can be found on an east-facing slope at the south end of the Mount. The area was overplanted as a pine plantation but was cleared in 1997. A granite cottage in a ruinous condition, and foundations of a granite workroom, are all that remain of a complex of buildings which included a magnanerie - a French word describing the place where silkworms are bred and fed. The whole venture was organised and financed by the Victorian Ladies Sericulture Company Limited. A wealthy English widow, Mrs Bladen-Neill organized this venture. Three years of unsuitable soil, lack of summer rains, dramatic winter frosts and the ravages of rabbits and possums were disastrous for the young mulberry trees. The enterprise was abandoned in February 1877.

Target Rock

Target Rock is a notable feature of the north-west slopes, marking the site of a rifle range utilised by the militia between the Boer War & World War I. Clearing of the pine trees in 1998 has enabled us to locate this rock. Upon the flat vertical west face of Target Rock can still be seen the outline of a circular target - probably painted with bitumen. From 1899 this was used a target for a rifle club formed in Harcourt as a response to the outbreak of the Boer War.

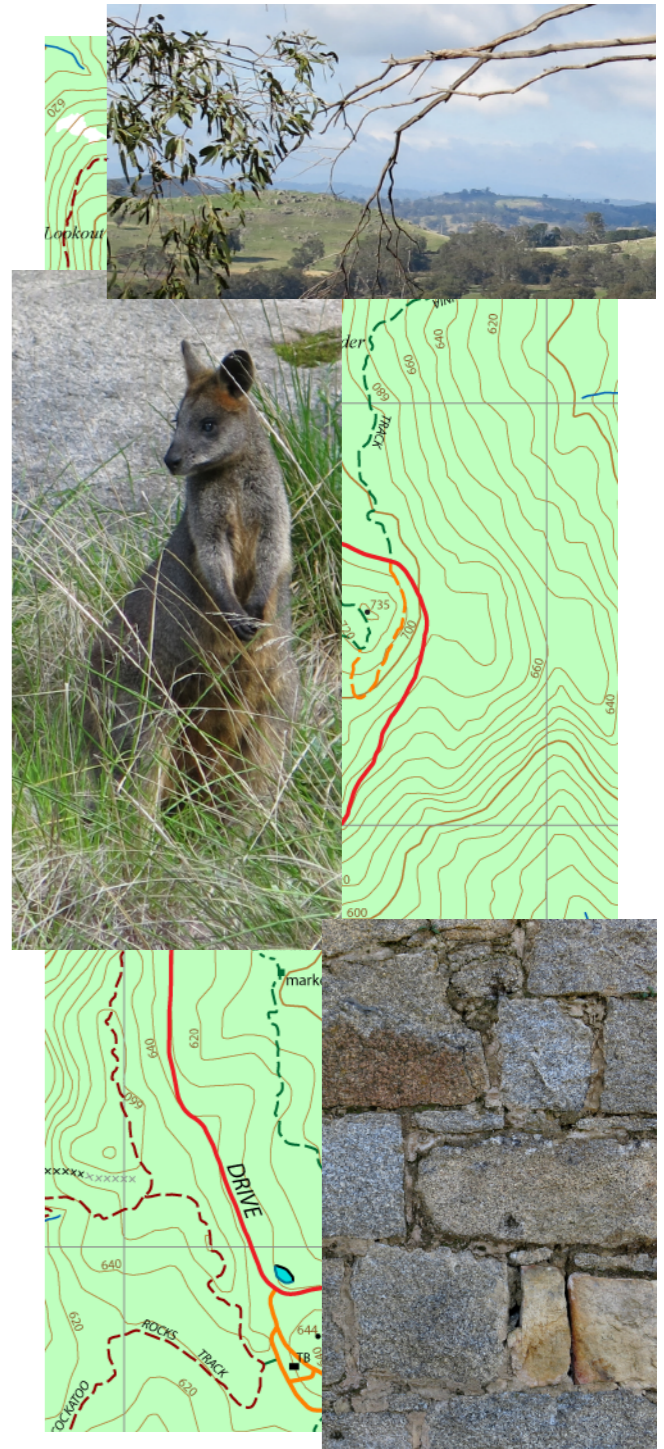
Granite Quarries

Large-scale quarrying of granite on the mountain started in 1859 with stone supplied to the Melbourne to Echuca Railway. Cornish quarryman Joseph Blight had arrived in the colony in 1855 and achieved some success in quartz reef mining at Eureka Reef. He then turned to quarrying at Mount Alexander, at first providing stone for the railway. He began to work the Blight's Quarry site in 1862. A 36-ton block of granite for the Burke and Wills Memorial in the Melbourne General Cemetery was sourced here in 1863. At the time it was the largest block of stone ever quarried in the Colony. Harcourt Granite has a reputation as a first-rate building/dimensional stone. It is used for building and monumental work, with waste stone being cut for spalls. Quarry sites are easily recognisable by the great piles of cut stone discarded on site. A close look at the drill marks gives an indication of the age of the quarry. Smooth holes were produced by air compressor drills, while more "ragged" holes date from the era when the holes were "drilled" by two men; one holding/turning the drill (in reality a long-shanked cold-chisel) and the other being the striker. The age of the site may also be gauged from the mature gums and pine trees growing between the blocks of discarded stone.



Mount Alexander

Contemporary and Historic Notes Walking Tracks Map



Harcourt Valley Heritage and Tourist Centre
harcourt.vic.au

Cartography Community Mapping
cartography.id.au

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