

LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

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An ad-hoc one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy

Herring Island which should really be called something else.

It's not a natural island, and it has no logical connection to Sir Edmund Herring, KCMG, KBE, DSO &c &c, but it's a great little bushland place. Created in the 1930s when canal-diggers cut through a loop of the Yarra, it is now a haven, managed by Parks Victoria, and accessible only by boat.



This part of the river was the common ground between the Wurundjeri people to the north and the Boonwurrung people to the south. It has a very natural feel – although you won't find too much Aboriginal heritage there. The whole island has been thoroughly disturbed by earthworks. But what about *intangible* heritage?

Nearby we have the City of **Yarra**, the Parish of **Jika Jika**, the suburbs of **Toorak** and **Prahran** – all serving on a daily basis to connect us to Aboriginal languages now virtually extinct. Such names take us back through the decades to a time when surveyors and clergymen attempted to render Aboriginal languages into the English alphabet. It is an important but imperfect legacy.

Did the traditional owners of the Geelong-Ballarat country call themselves the Wathaurung or the Watha Wurrung or the Wadawurrung? Were the people of Westernport called the Boon Wurrung or the Bunurong? In Gippsland, the Gunaikurnai have overcome the dilemma by concatenating the two versions of their traditional name.

Aboriginal intangible heritage has now been recognised by parliament. It includes any knowledge of Aboriginal tradition – but excludes anything already widely known to the public. Residents of Toorak and Prahran (and Warragul and Wycheproof) need not contemplate their addresses becoming the intellectual property of the local RAP.



Lex guesses that this is a largely symbolic gesture. But gestures can foster respect, and at the present time, respect is important. So without wishing to show disrespect to Sir Edmund Herring, KCMG, KBE, DSO &c &c Lex is of the opinion that it's time for this island, artificial yet redolent of Melbourne's pre-settlement landscape, to get a new name. An Aboriginal name...

See you there! Lex Loci

Thanks to Uncle Byron Powell of the Wathaurong.

Artwork: Josephine Napurrula - Waterhole at Papunya (details)

The Public Land Consultancy
ABN 69 067 045 520
Principal: David Gabriel-Jones
Email: lex.loci@publicland.com.au

27 / 539 St Kilda Road
Melbourne, VIC 3004
phone: (03) 9534 5128

postal: PO Box 2251
St Kilda West, VIC 3182
mobile: 0412 134 243
www.publicland.com.au