

Wallaga Lake Today



The sacred tree

Wallaga Lake is possibly the most beautifully positioned Aboriginal reserve in the State. Situated 12 miles from Narooma on the South Coast, it lies between a circle of mountains, overlooking the tranquil lake and in full view of the white sands and surf of the adjacent beach.

The reserve is home to sixty people, forming eight families living in houses on the sloping shores of the lake. Some of the men are employed in the nearby timber mill. The older children go by bus to school at the picturesque town of Narooma and the younger ones, since the closure of the old reserve school some years ago, travel to primary school at nearby Bermagui.

The people of Wallaga Lake have lost much of their tribal culture, but still retain associations with their past. The residents still tell the story of the time 200 years ago when their ancestors ambushed and defeated the marauding Victorian tribes on the shore of the lake.

The sacred tree still stands elegantly aloof above the reserve and down below on the shore line lies

the tribal burial ground. Today the people of Wallaga Lake are seeking to have the area registered so that again they can bury their dead alongside their forefathers.

Unofficial manager of the reserve is 63 years old "Uncle Ted" Thomas. Ted was born and grew up at Wallaga. After working in various jobs in Victoria and New South Wales, including 9 years as a leading hand at a Sydney foundry, Ted returned to his birthplace a few years ago.

After the residents successfully petitioned for the removal of the official manager, Ted moved into the manager's house. Today he operates an artifacts shop, carving boomerangs, battle axes, etc., which his wife, an accomplished artist, decorates with tribal symbols and local scenes. Ted has also collected a wide range of Aboriginal relics, including tools and weapons used by the reserve's original inhabitants, which lie scattered around the shores of the lake.

The people of Wallaga Lake have no intention of leaving their idyllic surrounds. They have cleared