

Walk to Coranderrk – 2013

The 150th Anniversary Festival celebrations began with a memorial walk – the inaugural **Walk to Coranderrk** on the morning of Feb 24th from the banks of the Watts River in Healesville to the Coranderrk Station.



This walk commemorates the arduous trek made by Wurundjeri elder Simon Wonga and his cousin William Barak, and their group of forty, during the early months of 1863 as they searched for a permanent home for their people.

The group travelled across The Great Divide, from the Acheron to the Watts River, eventually selecting land at the junction of the Yarra River and Coranderrk Creek - now Badger Creek - close to the present-day location of Healesville.

The inaugural Walk to Coranderrk began on the parkland along the Watts River, just north of Main Street. Sisters Jacqui Wandin and Brooke Collins introduced the walk, and its aim, and spoke about the forthcoming 150th Anniversary Festival.



After a welcome and introduction, sisters Jacqui Wandin and Brooke Collins participants moved away from the banks of the Watts River and the procession wound its way along the streets of Healesville. Traffic was stopped as Walk participants explained the event and its purpose.

The Walk continued along to the Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road, alongside the land that is now Healesville Sanctuary but which once had been part of the original Coranderrk Station. It took no great feat of the imagination to journey back in time, between eucalypts and wattles, to visualise the landscape through which the original party had travelled.

The walkers continued down Barak Lane to the entrance of the Coranderrk property. Along the drive Allan Wandin, now resident at Coranderrk, invited everyone to stop under the shade of an ancient oak tree planted by original station residents. He gave a warm welcome and invited everyone to enjoy refreshments at the homestead while absorbing the beauty of his people's country. Allan emphasised the enduring connections being built by such shared events as the Walk to Coranderrk.

For descendants of original inhabitants, walking home to Coranderrk symbolises their people's journey as they searched for a home. The walk also represents the journey into the future as Coranderrk is restored as a living place of belonging where everyone will be welcome: indigenous and non-indigenous. This re-enactment of part of the 1863 walk invites us all to reflect on history and to show our commitment to the strengthening of unity between all Victorians.