Bruthen History Walk

The Brabralung people of the Gunaikurnai clan were the original inhabitants of Bruthen and District. European settlement started in the 1840s and the landmarks in this brochure are European built dating back as far as the 1880s.

We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of this land, and pay respect to elders past and present

The photos used in this flyer are supplied courtesy of the East Gippsland Historical Society, Ray Donelly, John Reid, and the Museums Victoria Collection

Bruthen sits in the foothills of the rugged Great Dividing Range which shaped the history of all those who made their home here. As in the old days roads lead North, East, South and West from Bruthen.

The Gunaikurnai are the first people of this Country. The Gunaikurnai have survived for tens of thousands of years, often through very difficult times. They looked after this Country passing on stories and traditions through countless generations, maintaining their connection to Country and to ancestors.

In the 1840s, the first European pastoralists used the Tambo Valley as a route from the Monaro to the Gippsland plains. Matthew and Thomas Macalister took up the area as the Kilmorie Run in 1845. In the 1860s the Tambo Valley was quickly taken up by settlers.

Wheat, oats and potatoes were grown on the fertile river flats and by the 1880s maize and hops were also important crops. Later the timber industry became important for the economy of the region.

Bruthen's location made it a popular stopping off spot on important trade routes. In the 1860s steamers began to transport goods between Mossiface and Melbourne along the Tambo. The Tambo Shire office was based in Bruthen from 1882. Bruthen Station opened in 1916 with the coming of the railway.

Steamer traffic stopped in the 1930's, rail services ceased in 1987, and the Shire of Tambo amalgamated with the East Gippsland Shire in 1994. Today the town still has a strong farming community and is a popular stop for tourists.

Signs of Bruthen's history can be seen in the old buildings and the railway line now converted to the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

Site 1 - Bruthen Art & Information Centre & Heritage Huts Display

You can start the Bruthen History Walk at any point along the map, but a good place to start is at the Heritage Huts and the Art & Information Centre.

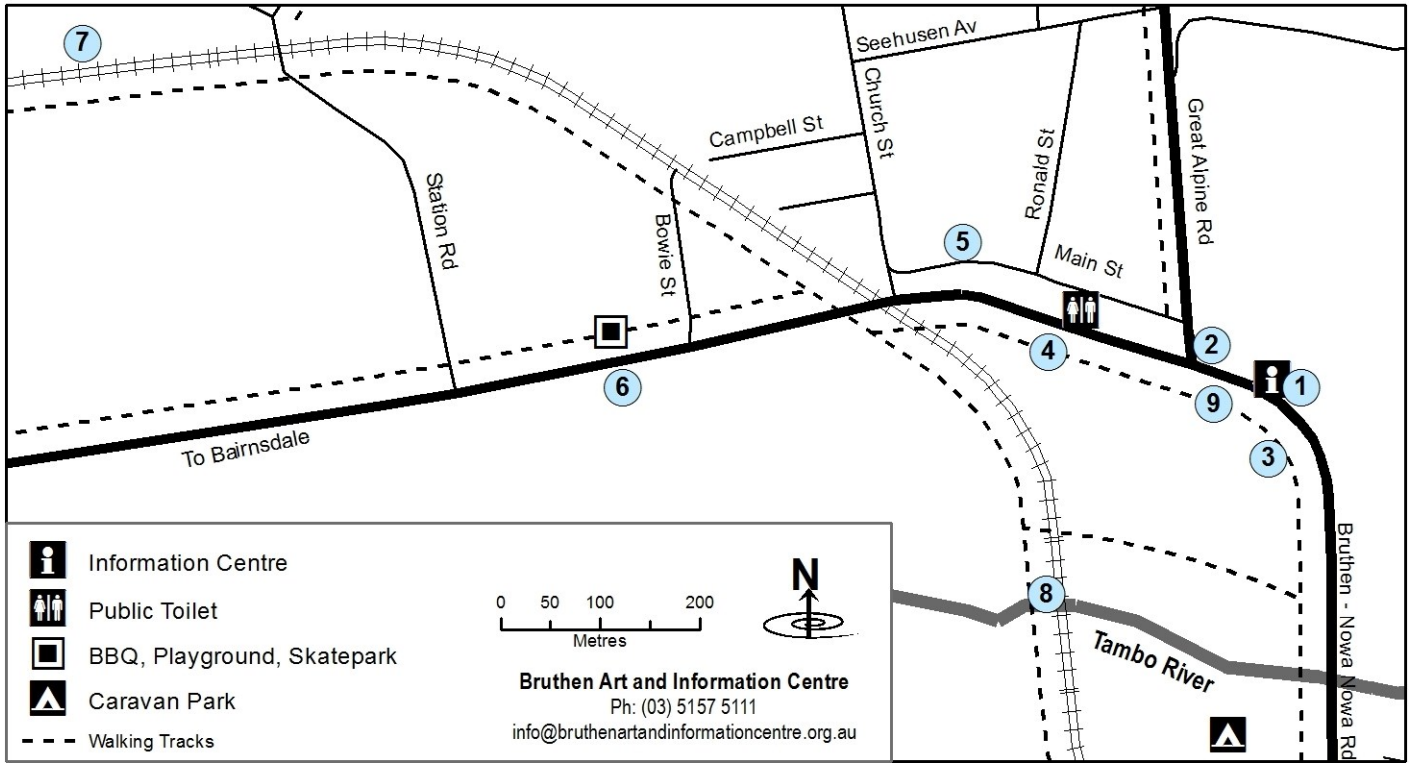
The Information Centre building is approximately 110 years old, and was relocated to its current site in 2010 when it faced demolition. The oldest wooden shop in town it has been a Chemist shop, SP Bookie, fruit shop and an Op Shop.

The two Heritage Huts were also saved from deterioration and relocated to their current site in 2016, to become the home for the Bruthen Heritage Displays. The Fettlers Hut and the Police Lockup are significant remnants of the history of our local area. Look for the signage at each hut for more information.

Site 2 - O'Keefe's Royal Mail Hotel

The hotel was built around 1882, and was a significant landmark during the days of the bullock trains. Today only the corner of the building remains.

This building is now a private residence - please respect the owner's privacy.



Site 3 - Bruthen Inn Hotel

The Bruthen Inn Hotel opened in 1858, with a number of changes and extensions to the building over the years. The current red brick building was built in 1938, but there are still old weatherboard sections at the back of the pub that were built pre-1900's. Pictured below, the pub in early 1900's with the Commercial Travellers Association (CTA) Building alongside. The CTA was formed in 1880 to look after salesmen who crisscrossed the countryside on train or horse-drawn carriage showing their companies' wares to shopkeepers.

Site 4 - General Store

The Bruthen General Store was established in 1860 in the brick building at 56 Main Street (now a private home) before being moved next door to it's current location around 1882. The store is made of bricks which were made in Bruthen from Tambo River clay and mud. From the six or seven merchants that were in Bruthen during early years "The Store" is the only general store and merchant remaining in the town.

Site 5 - Mechanics Hall & Post Office

Pictured on the front of this flyer, these two buildings have played a pivotal role in community life. The Post Office was built in 1890, and the Mechanics Hall was built in 1883. The hall has housed the Court of Petty Sessions, the Tambo Shire Council, and the circulating library.

Site 6 - The old Star Hotel

Built around 1880, for many years before rail or motorised transport, the old Star Hotel was the booking office for the Omeo, Bairnsdale, Buchan & Orbost Coaches. ***The Star Hotel is now a private residence - please respect the owner's privacy.***

Site 7 - Site of the Bruthen Railway Station & Site 8 - Railway Bridge over the Tambo River

The Bairnsdale to Orbost railway line was opened in 1916. The line mainly carried timber and farming produce, but in the early days passenger trains also ran. The last train to run the line was in 1987. The station buildings no longer exist, but the platform and the station master's house (now a private home) remain at the station site.

Site 9 - Bruthen Heritage Tea Rooms

Built circa 1924, the Heritage Tea Rooms is a nostalgic step back in time.

Take a 5 minute drive to Mossiface to view the heritage listed Hop Kilns. The Hop Kilns date from early 1880's, and are a rare surviving expression of the hop growing industry that flourished in the Gippsland region. ***Note: The Kilns are viewable from the road, but are not open to the public***