

# WELCOME TO... BILYA WALK TRACK

The Avon River (Gulgiga Bilya) is a place of great cultural significance to the Ballarong people.

- Respect the environment and wildlife.
- Please NO motorbikes, littering or fires.
- Ensure you have drinking water, a hat and suitable footwear.

LEFT: Avon Descent  
COVER: Red Banks Pool  
TOP: Sacred Ibis at Red Banks Pool. Photo: Wayne Clarke



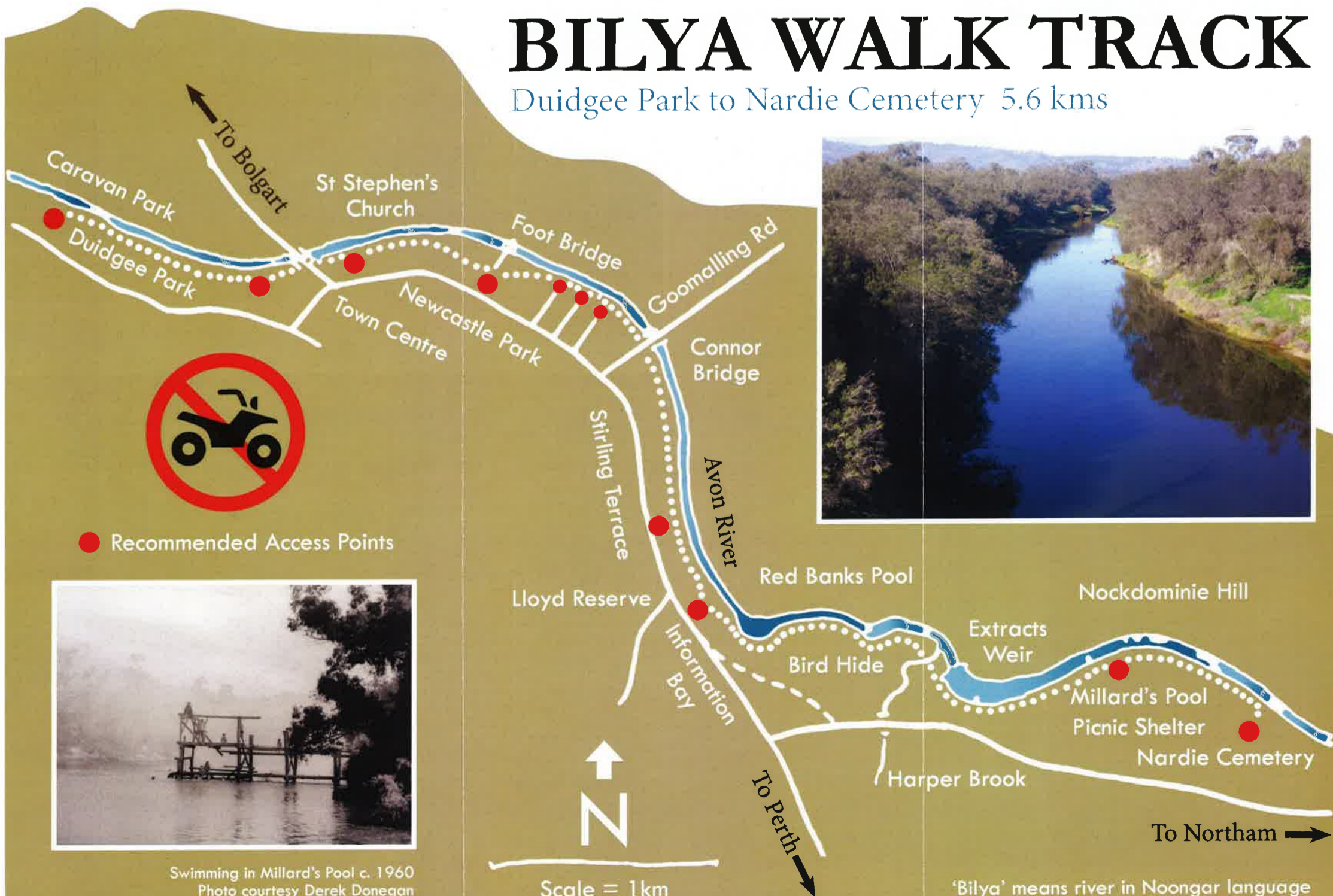
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The Toodyay Friends of the River (Inc) is a community conservation group that was first formed in 1994. The members are all volunteers & conduct a range of activities along the Avon River and its tributaries such as fencing, erosion control and revegetation. The Bilya Walk Track is a project by the organisation designed to connect the community to the Avon River by promoting the cultural, heritage and environmental values of this precious natural asset. Learn more about TFOR at [www.toodyayfor.org.au](http://www.toodyayfor.org.au)



# BILYA WALK TRACK

Duidgee Park to Nardie Cemetery 5.6 kms





## ▶ Duidgee Park and the Avon River

The walk begins at **Duidgee Park**, the name of which we are told comes from the original Ballardong place name for the location. Over the decades the word 'Duidgee' has become 'Toodyay'. As you walk under the **Newcastle Bridge**, you can see the flood levels indicated on one of the pylons. Note the level of the 1983 flood and imagine the predicted 100 year flood. Flooding of the river occurred regularly in times gone by with the record height recorded in 1872. After a series of floods in the 1950s the Avon River was 'trained' from Beverley to Toodyay by bulldozing a channel and removing vegetation and islands from the bed and banks. This was intended to allow flood waters to flow more quickly. Known as the **River Training Scheme (RTS)** it has had catastrophic environmental effects such as the silting up of the deep, permanent pools along the river.



## ▶ From town to Lloyd Reserve

Now follow the track along the river bank to **Connor Bridge** named after Daniel Connor, an Irish convict, who came to Toodyay as a hawker and later became one of the colony's wealthiest businessmen. This bridge on the Goomalling-Toodyay Road, was rebuilt in 2001. Once under the bridge the track enters a **Sheoak and Paperbark thicket**. Pay careful attention to the orange track markers as the track winds its way through to emerge at a fire break behind the **Baptist Church**. If this section is too wet you can take the higher track. Now continue on the fire break behind the light industrial area to reach **Lloyd Reserve**. This reserve encompasses 16 hectares of riparian vegetation, on land donated to the then Dept. of Environment by local farmer Oriel Lloyd in 1999. It is now under the joint management of the Shire of Toodyay and the Toodyay Friends of the River. (TFOR est. 1994).

The track leaves the fire-break and makes its way past botanical interpretation signage. A side track will take you down to the river where seating has been installed. Here is a fine view of the river and a great vantage point during the **Avon Descent**, an annual white-water boat race. The Bilya Walk Track is one of the few places along the 130 km route of this event (first weekend in August) that you can

easily follow the competitors from the river bank. Further on you will come to a picnic area with a table and seating. Here is the **Native Seed Orchard** where a local community group has established native plants from which seeds are harvested and propagated for revegetation projects.



The John Masters Bird Hide at Red Banks Pool

## ▶ Red Banks Pool

After taking a break at the picnic area, follow the track past the huge **Flooded Gum** (*Eucalyptus rudis*) towards the beautiful **Red Banks Pool**.

The track follows the high, eroded southern bank to reach the **John Masters Bird Hide**. The pool provides a permanent refuge for water birds during the long, dry summers. Quiet time spent here will be rewarded with sightings of some of the 60 or more water bird species recorded along the Avon River. You might glimpse a Long-necked Turtle sunning itself on a log. The bird hide and the interpretive signage is a project by **Toodyay Naturalists' Club** (est. 1968). Now the track hugs the river bank passing another rest station and meandering its way through the Flooded Gums and passing a number of smaller river pools. A footbridge is provided to allow the crossing of **Harper Brook** in winter.

## ▶ Extracts Weir to Millard's Pool

A short distance from here is the iconic **Extracts Weir**, a popular viewing point for the Avon Descent. The weir was built in the 1950s to create a water supply for Industrial Extracts Ltd's tannin factory. A little further on, a sealed walk track follows the bank of Millard's Pool. At over 2 kms long, it is the largest pool on the Avon River and the site of Toodyay's original and only swimming pool. The picnic shelter and table provide a place to rest. This is a good spot for launching a canoe or kayak for a pleasant paddle on the Pool - but please no power boats as the banks are fragile and water birds nest here. The sealed track will take you upstream along the edge of Millard's Pool passing through the remnants of citrus orchards that once thrived here.



Boating on Millard's Pool c. 1895-1900

## ▶ Through Toodyay town

As the track descends onto the river bank, you will pass **St. Stephen's Anglican Church** which was consecrated in 1862. Arriving in the Colony in 1837 as a settler Charles Harper Snr. was the church's first Minister. The track will now take you past the back yards of a number of Toodyay's historic buildings including **Stirling House**, originally the Toodyay Club (for local gentlemen) and the **Victoria Hotel**. This historic hotel dates from 1886 and features one of the few remaining Billiard Saloons in the state. A little further on you will pass under the **school footbridge** which allows school children to walk to and from school via **Newcastle Park**. The bridge was refurbished in 2011.



## ▶ Nardie Cemetery and Extracts Industrial Park

On the far bank at the base of **Nockdomine Hill**, you will notice early settlers' huts before a turn will take you to **Nardie Cemetery** (gazetted 1856), resting place for many of Toodyay's pioneers. Next to the cemetery is part of the original **Industrial Extracts factory**, so called because of the process of extracting tannin from wood. The timber was mostly **Wandoo** (*Eucalyptus accedens* and *wandoo*) sourced from a state forest 20 km NW of here now known as the **Julimar Conservation Park**. You are now at the end (or beginning) of the **Bilya Walk Track**. A picnic table is provided for you to take a well earned break or spend some time wandering around the historic headstones, amongst them that of Thomas Millard himself. This is a good place to arrange for a pick up or drop off, or you may want to return the 5.6 kms along the track back to Toodyay.

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