

HANN'S CREEK BUSHLAND RESERVE

This small wayside stop is accessed from the Frankston-Flinders Road between Balnarring and Merricks. A pleasant, tree-shaded area with a barbecue, picnic table and toilet block, it abuts a fenced-off paddock where dogs can play off-leash. A barrier of trees, high bushes and undergrowth screens it from the roadway. The grassed area beneath the gum trees runs back as far as a wire fence which separates it from the bushland through which a creek flows.

This is Hanns Creek, part of the Merricks Creek system. Merricks Creek begins further north and, in the Merricks North area, is joined by another tributary. As Hann's Creek it flows south through Balnarring and again becomes Merricks Creek as it passes though the land behind Balnarring Beach. During the 1990s it was suggested the name "Merricks Creek" should be adopted for the creek's entirety. This drew an indignant letter from Merricks landholder, Pyllis Cole, who rejected the idea outright. She sought the historical society's support. The name "Hann" was a tribute to the early pioneer, Joseph Hann. It should stay. It did.

Joseph Hann had taken up the license to the Coolart run in 1853 and applied to buy 640 acres under pre-emptive right. He was refused as he had not held the land for long enough. An Englishman from Wiltshire, Hann successfully applied again the following year and became the first European to own land in this district. He also continued to hold the remainder of the run, about 8,000 acres, under license. The Hann family, Joseph, his wife Elizabeth, their daughter and four sons stayed in the area for eight years before leaving to take up land in Northern Queensland.

Not far from the small reserve, a wooden bridge once spanned the creek. This was the railway bridge for the trains on the Bittern to Red Hill line. There are no longer any traces of the bridge.

- Ilma Hackett

Balnarring & District Historical Society