



Maddington Kenwick Walk Trail

Introduction

Maddington Kenwick river ramble. Discover the hidden history of Maddington and Kenwick as you follow the winding banks of the Canning River.

How did Kenwick and Maddington get their names?

The suburb of Kenwick gets its name from Kenwick Park – the farm of early settler Wallace Bickley. In 1858 Kenwick Park consisted of 3960 acres on both sides of the Canning River. A multi-purpose building existed near the Kenwick Pioneer Cemetery in the 1860s.

The suburb of Maddington is named after Maddington Park, the home of John Randell Phillips. Established in 1832, Phillips named his home after a town in Wiltshire, England. Maddington developed as an agricultural area with market gardens, poultry farms and orchards. In the 1950s and 60s Maddington and surrounding suburbs were further subdivided and developed into residential suburbs and the Maddington Industrial Estate. From 1907 to 1973 Maddington was the home to the administration buildings of the Municipality of Gosnells.

There is a lot to see so make sure you allow at least one and half hours to walk the trail. Start the river ramble at Wilkinson Homestead.

1. City of Gosnells Museum - Wilkinson Homestead

Homestead Road, Gosnells.

We start our trail here. While strictly speaking Wilkinson Homestead is in Gosnells it is the home of the district's Museum collection and is a great way to find out more about the history of Maddington and Kenwick.

Wilkinson Homestead was built in 1912 on the banks of the Canning River for John Wilkinson. John was a tailor who relocated from Ballarat with his wife Emma in 1905.

Their 27 acre property produced large amounts of citrus fruit, stone fruit and almonds. Like all early properties fronting the Canning River, was irrigated from the river. Their property is typical of the period with a high pitched roof and sweeping verandah.

Today the Wilkinson's property offers a chance to step back in time and discover the history of the area. The museum features a collection of textiles, agricultural machinery, household items, furniture, photographs and a 1927 Essex motor vehicle. The shed is made from material salvaged from the Maddington Centenary Hall, the 1929 Gosnells Road Board building and the Orange Grove brickworks. In particular the roof trusses of the large shed and some seats are from the Maddington Centenary Hall and the windows are from the 1929 Road Board building which stood next to it. In the collection there are paintings by early Kenwick resident Kathleen Liddel and some of her personal items such as a manicure set, silk dress, parasol and silver mesh evening purse.

Parking at the Museum is free. Wilkinson Homestead is open Sunday 2-5pm & Wednesday 10-2pm. Admission costs apply.



After your visit to Wilkinson Homestead proceed approximately 300 metres along the footpath next to Homestead Road, walking away from the Museum. Stop when you reach a large Pine (*Pinus radiata*) on the edge of the park and a large commemorative boulder on your right.

2. Grave of John and Frances Davis.

Homestead Road, Gosnells.

John Okey Davis was one of the original settlers in the Canning area and was allocated this land in 1829. Davis and his wife Frances and seven children set sail from London and arrived in the Swan River Colony in 1829 aboard the ship Lotus. They had been attracted to advertisements in England for cheap land and were allocated a staggering 7026 acres that covered almost all of what we know today as Gosnells including Huntingdale and Southern River.

The Davis family named their farm Chenies and planted wheat and vegetables. Life was hard and isolated in their new home. Frances died in 1835 only six years after arriving and John died a year later after a long illness. Both were buried here on their property. The headstone on their grave is a replica of the original which has been stored for preservation. In 1983 their great grand-children planted a tree at their gravesite.

Their sons continued to farm the property as well as nearby Stoke Farm in Maddington which they leased from John Randell Phillips. The property was sold in 1862 to Charles Gosnell, the owner of a well known English perfume and soap making company, who bought it as an investment. Although he only visited his property once, it was his name that became associated with the development of the Gosnells area when developers marketed the land as the Gosnells Estate.

You are standing on the edge of John Okey Davis Park. In the middle of the park is one of the area's oldest trees, a heritage listed 500 year old jarrah tree, which marks the near location of one of the Wilkinson's early farm structures.

Follow the path towards the river, turn right and stop on the small bridge.

3. Southern River

This is the Southern River which in its higher reaches starts out as the Wungong River. Paperbarks (*Melaleuca* sp) and Flooded Gums (*Eucalyptus rudis*) are the most prolific trees in the area.

Aboriginal people used the paperbark leaves traditionally for medicinal purposes, including chewing the young leaves to alleviate headaches and other ailments. The softness and flexibility of the paperbark made it a useful tree to Aboriginal people. It was used to line coolamons when used as cradles, as bandages, as sleeping mats, and as material for building humpies. It was also used for wrapping food for cooking (in the same way aluminium foil is used today), and as a disposable raincoat.

Continue walking on the footpath until you get to Burslem Road bridge.

Beyond the bridge is the site of a wooden bridge built in the 1830s that was washed away during a flood in the 1840s. Diagonally across the river is Maddington Homestead. A deep pool in the river behind the homestead was where sheep were washed prior to shearing.



In October 1867, William Blower was washing sheep when he was attacked by a ram and later died.

Just slightly to the south of Burslem Bridge the Southern River joins the Canning River.

The trail continues onto Burslem Road bridge. Stop on the bridge over the Canning River.

4. The Canning River

The Canning River is approximately 100kms long and flows from the Darling Scarp as a major tributary to the Swan River. The Canning River received its contemporary name in March 1827 when Captain James Stirling aboard the HMS Success named the river after George Canning, an eminent British statesman who was Prime Minister of Great Britain at the time and whose government facilitated the funds for the expedition.

Nyungar people call the Canning River "Djarlgarra". The river provided plentiful food to the Beeliar and Beloo people – fish, eggs, snakes, lizards, tortoises, marron, gilgies and birds were found here.

As hunters and gatherers they made the most of wild food resources. Men concentrated on capturing larger animals and the women dug for roots, collected fruits, seeds, bird eggs, insect larvae and trapped small reptiles.

Irene Coulthard, who grew up in Maddington, remembered that in the 1920s and 1930s the river in flood contained oranges that had been washed in from citrus orchards by the sides of the river during flood times and got caught under logs. The site where the Canning River met the Southern River was a popular swimming spot for local Maddington children, while Kenwick children had another pool up towards the Royal Street bridge that was big enough for canoeing.

Irene's parents used to warn her to be careful of the river in winter as it was fast flowing. Sometimes the river would rise and cause the Royal Street bridge in Kenwick to become inaccessible and this meant that the children couldn't always cross to go to school.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s the Canning Dam was built near Araluen and stopped the river from flooding so frequently. When the dam was completed in 1940 it had provided 500 jobs and had cost 1.1 million pounds. This dam has reduced the flow of the Canning River by more than 90%.

During the Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, as part of employment schemes, sustenance workers would be employed removing large fallen logs from the river. Today naturally fallen debris is generally left in the river as it provides habitat for aquatic ecosystems.

Continue to travel across Burslem Bridge and walk along Burslem Drive. Stop outside the Arcadia Waters estate, opposite Maddington Park Homestead.

5. Conflict along the Canning

This area was once the site of conflict between local Beeliar people and local settlers. In the local history book *The Gosnells Story* the situation is eloquently summarized by historians Dr Gil McDonald and Bill Cooper;



“By the late 1830’s, two very different social systems were locked in a violent struggle for survival along the river. The Aboriginal people, whose complex and efficient system of land use had been refined over a period of at least 40,000 years, were not slow to perceive that the white invasion was rapidly destroying their traditional way of life. The settlers, struggling to establish farms in this alien environment, failed to realise that the firing of the bush, the stealing of potatoes and the spearing of livestock in the back country were all in keeping with the Aboriginal hunting and gathering economy and was by no means always wanton acts of vandalism or revenge.” (The Gosnells Story page 36)

The *Perth Gazette* documented this ongoing conflict in the Maddington area. The issue of December 16, 1837 recorded the spearing of two boys, aged 9 and 11 who had been tending Major Nairn’s sheep near the Canning River. The principal assailant was identified as a man named Buoyeen.

6. Maddington Park

Burslem Drive, Maddington.

Maddington Farm was established by John Randell Phillips. In 1833 he sold it to Major William Nairn. Major Nairn renamed it Maddington Park and built a large two storey house that was a fine example of colonial architecture.

When it was advertised for sale in 1843 it was described as;

“3,240 acres of rich land equally adapted for either agricultural or pastoral purpose. On this estate between 500 and 600 sheep have been depastured for the last ten years, and few flocks in the colony has thriven (sic) so well. The house has been constructed to afford every convenience as a family residence, with underground cellars. It is built of stone and brick, and the timber of well seasoned mahogany. The second floor commands an extensive view of boundaries of this estate, the windings of the River with the Darling Range in the distance. There are also out-offices including a well built barn, stock yard and shed for sheep. The present crop of wheat and barley will fully shew (sic) the richness of the soil. A good garden adjoins the premises.”

Perth Gazette 14 October 1843

The house was used by the Harris family from the 1870s until 1983.

Vegetables were always grown at Maddington Park but when electricity was connected in 1927, production increased as pump fed irrigation could be introduced. Cauliflowers and cabbages were the main winter crops, watermelons and rockmelons in summer. Potatoes were also grown. From the 1950s to 1970 the property was producing an average of 180,000 cauliflowers per year. Suburban sprawl began to encroach on the market garden and much of the property was sold in 1978 for the Maddington shopping complex.

In 2004 the house was devastated by fire. Today, stabilisation works are taking place and plans for conservation and restoration are being negotiated. Further subdivision of the land for residential purposes is also occurring.

Look eastwards towards the Darling Ranges and you will see the Gosnells Quarry which began as White Rock Quarries in 1930. It was acquired by CSR Readymix in 1961. The granite that is blasted from the quarry is believed to be 1000 million years old.



Continue along Burslem Drive towards the roundabout. Turn right into Olga Road and walk to the corner of Olga Road and Attfield Street. Turn right into Attfield Street and walk towards River Avenue.

This area of Maddington was once part of a property, Stoke Farm, established in 1830. The land was subdivided and sold in 1913. The land was advertised as being suitable for market gardens and some successful orchards were then developed. Some houses remain in Attfield Street from this time.

Turn left into River Avenue.

7. Cowen House (former)

22 River Avenue, Maddington.

This house was built in 1923 and was one of the homes of Robert Cowen, who had also occupied 21 River Avenue. The house used to sit on 10 acres and had good water supply for its citrus orchard from a creek that runs through the area. Cowen taught many people how to operate an orchard. He experimented with many crops such as peanuts and apples and recommended that oranges be grown in the district.

Robert Cowen served as Chairman of the Gosnells Roads Board. He had lived in a 1830s mud brick home (now demolished) on land from Stoke Farm. had been established by John Randell Phillips after he had sold neighboring Maddington Farm to William Nairn in 1833.

When Stoke Farm was subdivided in 1913 Cowen moved to a nearby cottage that is now in disrepair and located in the middle of an orchard set back from Albany Highway.

Turn back towards Attfield Street from the house and continue down River Avenue.

8. Avenue of Trees planted by William Orr

Cnr River Avenue and Phillip Street, Maddington

This avenue of trees was planted by William (Billy) Orr in 1929. William Orr was born in 1883 in Sale, Victoria and came to WA in 1906. He was an active member of the Gosnells Roads Board and was Chairman for nine years until retiring in 1936. He was well known in the community for being an excellent sportsman with football a firm favourite. For many years he was the Secretary of the West Australian Football League and contributed to the Young Australia League which established Araluen Botanic Park.

The trees are a combination of mature Peppermint, Flame, Kurrajong and Box trees which line both sides of the road. The trees are protected for their natural heritage value and their connection to William Orr.

Turn back on River Avenue towards Phillip Street and turn left into Phillip Street. Walk along Phillip Street.

9. Tarling House (former) / Timber House

24 Phillip St, Maddington



This was the home of Philip and Annie Tarling who came to Maddington from the goldfields after arriving from the United Kingdom in 1908. Philip Tarling was the local postman and served on the Gosnells Roads Board.

The house was built in c1911-13 and is located in one of the earliest residential land releases in Maddington. It is a small rectangular weatherboard home with a verandah on three sides with a modern extension.

Continue walking back towards Burslem Drive and retrace your steps to the Burslem Road Bridge. Continue to retrace your steps. Turn left and walk along the river. Cross the Southern River and walk along Homestead Road to the City of Gosnells Museum - Wilkinson Homestead.