



AUSTRALIAN ANGLICAN
CHURCH CALENDAR

St Paul's, Koroit, VIC



St Paul's Anglican Church in Koroit, South Western Victoria is a charming and dignified bluestone church. Along with St John's, Port Fairy, it comprises the Port Fairy parish in the Diocese of Ballarat.

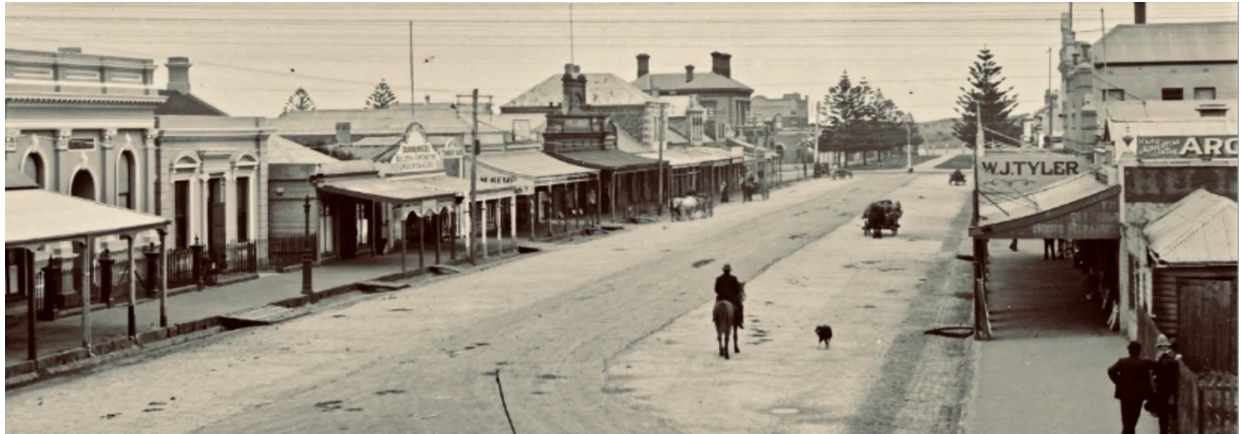
The recognised traditional owners of this district in which the parish lies, the Gunditjji / Eastern Maar people, lived in this area for many **thousands** of years. They developed a sophisticated system of aquaculture and eel harvesting. This is a woven timber trap, photo taken by María José Zúñiga.



Source: [Circular Water Stories](#)



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Koroit and Port Fairy are about 19 km apart in complementary locations. Port Fairy, pictured above early on in European settlement, is situated in a harbour, and was explored by the crew of the sealing ship *The Fairy* around 1828. Port Fairy became a town in 1843, and for a period was called Belfast at the wish of a leading citizen, James Atkinson, before reverting to its earlier name in 1887. By the 1850s it was Victoria's second most important port after the Port of Melbourne. Today the town's main industries are tourism and fishing.



Koroit, on the other hand, is situated inland. Above is an early photo of Koroit which sits on the northern side of Tower Hill, a high extinct volcano in this prolific volcanic region that stretches from Colac in the east to Mount Gambier in South Australia. Indigenous artifacts have been found that show the Gunditji people were living there when the mountain erupted 5,000 years ago. They called Tower Hill Koroitji, from which Koroit takes its name.



Tower Hill was painted by the renowned artist Eugene Von Guerard in 1855. Tower Hill can be seen from out at sea, as it was by the French explorer Baudin in 1802, and has a crater lake which supplied the early town's drinking water. The area is now a wildlife reserve and attracts many visitors for its spectacular scenery.



[Koroit Irish Festival 2025](http://koroitirishfestival.com.au)

The first European settlers came to the area in 1837 and in the next 20 years there was an influx of immigrants, especially from Ireland, who found the rich volcano soils well-suited to potato farming. It now hosts vibrant Irish festivals and indeed enjoys a claim to be Australia's 'most Irish town'.

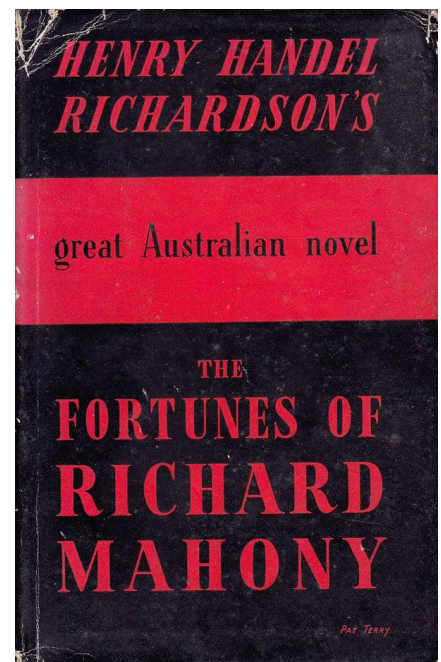


Koroit also has a literary connection with Australian novelist Henry Handel Richardson (pictured here and born in 1870 as Ethel Richardson). She moved to Koroit with her family in 1878 at a time when her father's mental and physical health were declining. He was a doctor, but his unwell condition had caused a deterioration in the family's finances, forcing his wife to take a position at Koroit as a postmistress.

When the family lived in Koroit, Richardson's father died. His life later inspired her most famous work, **The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney**.

It's believed that Koroit was the model for the fictitious town, 'Gymgurra' named in that trilogy.

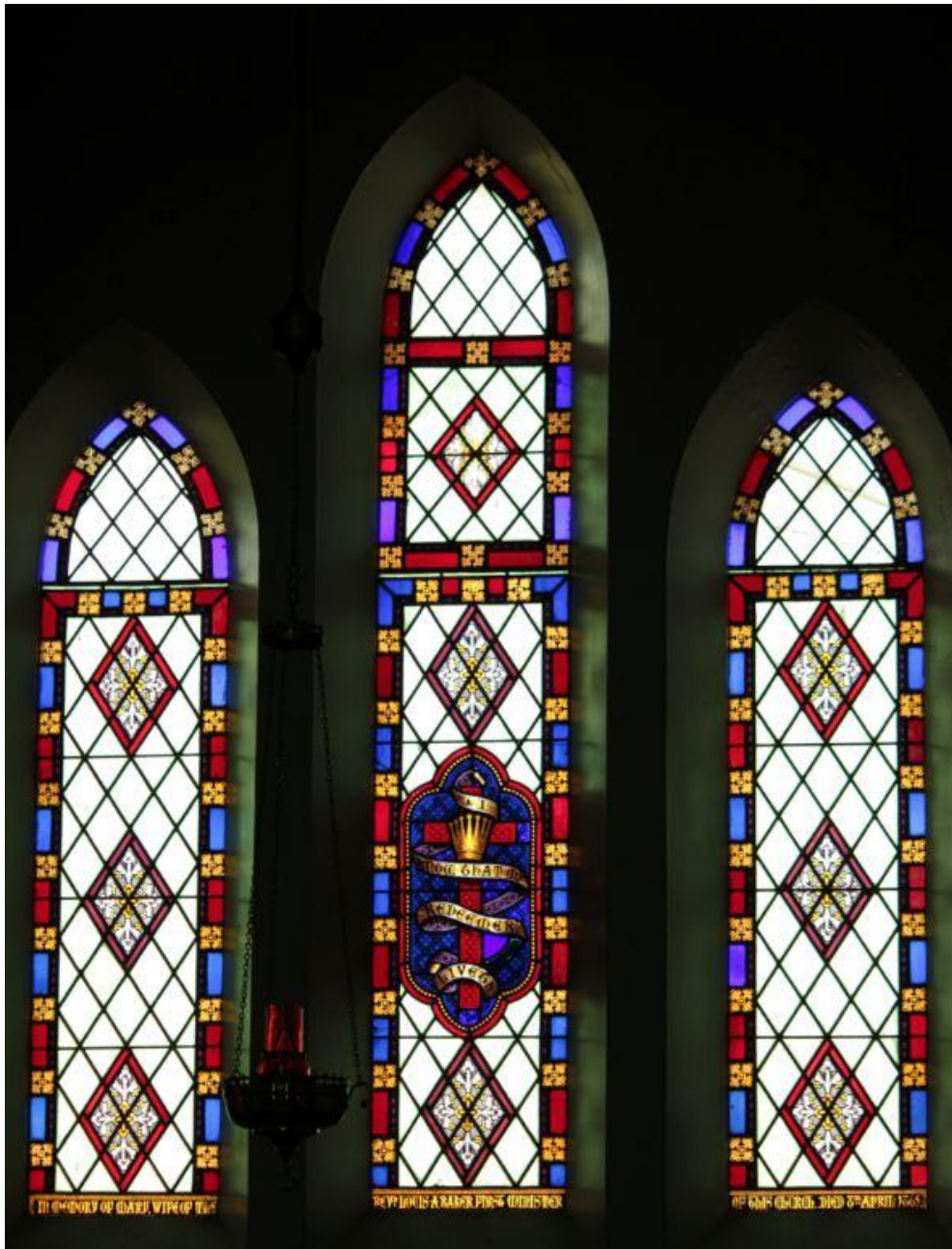
Richardson describes Gymgurra as: 'Two wide, ludicrously wide crossroads, at the corner of which clustered three or four shops, a Bank, an hotel, the post office, the lock-up; one and all built of an iron-grey stone that was almost as dark as the earth'.



The foundation stone of St Paul's, Anglican Church Koroit was laid by the Rt Reverend Bishop Perry of Melbourne on 9 March 1870. The Melbourne Argus newspaper reported that there was good attendance, drawn from quite far afield, and that the church was to be built "in the early English style of Gothic architecture, after designs drawn by the architect, Mr Rawlinson".



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One of the striking and, one senses, much-loved features of St Paul's is a set of three tall stained-glass windows on the northern side, apparently subscribed by the parish in memory of Mary, wife of the first vicar, the Reverend Louis A Baker, who another press report described was "much beloved and valued, his name being a household name in that locality". He died at the age of 76 on the 13th of April 1889 of Typhoid. These windows depicted above were created by the Melbourne firm, Ferguson and Urie, who in the mid to late 19th century supplied stained-glass windows to many churches, public buildings and grand homesteads throughout Victoria and beyond.



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St Paul's, Koroit, has not been without its drama. In March 1870, The Bendigo Advertiser reported under the heading: A SACRILEGIOUS THIEF.

"Some mischievous fellow has had the audacity to remove the foundation stone of St. Paul's Church, Koroit, recently laid by the Bishop of Melbourne. This occurred on the morning of Friday last, when it was discovered that the stone had been removed, the cavity opened, the bottle extracted, and the contents, namely, the scroll and newspapers, cast on one side. These are now in the possession of the trustees. It was thought by some ... to be either a malicious act, or one committed during a drunken bout; but the officers of the church believe that it was done by a loafing scoundrel who hoped to find some coins deposited in the bottle under the stone, but who had his trouble for nothing."