

## Lal Lal History



Gazetted as a public park in 1865, Lal Lal Falls has been a scenic reserve and picnic destination for more than 140 years. The New Year's Day race meeting at Lal Lal became an institution with thousands travelling by rail to the course.

The falls are situated within the traditional country of the Wathaurung people. They are one of Victoria's most significant indigenous cultural sites. It is believed that Bunjil, their creator, lived at the site. The name Lal Lal is thought to be Aboriginal for "dashing of waters".

The Lal Lal Blast Furnace on Iron Mine Rd is also considered an industrial site of great historic significance by the National Trust. It is the only remaining blast furnace of its kind from the colonial era. It is also the only 19th century blast furnace in the Southern Hemisphere and, by world standards, is a superb example of a 19th century blast furnace.

An iron ore quarry on the west bank of the Moorabool River and the smelting works were established by the Lal Lal Iron Mining Company in 1874. At its peak 160 men were employed at these works. They initially supplied a booming Ballarat with iron for the production of mining machinery and railway locomotives. The stone and brick blast furnace, which remains, was the third on the site, being built in 1880-81. It produced 2260 tonnes of pig iron from 4429 tonnes of ore before the venture folded in 1884 due to a fall in prices and declining demand from Ballarat.

Remnants at the site include the furnace, a Cornish flue, a tramway bed, mines, machinery sites, stone quarries and charcoal sites. These elements are situated in five hand-hewn terraces which were cut into the side of the hill. The furnace was situated on the lowest level with a steam engine, boiler, pumps and other machinery on the next two strata and stone sheds and stockpiles on the top two levels.

The Lal Lal district has always been a rich source of mineral wealth. Mining industries have operated there for more than 130 years and continue today with the extraction of high-quality kaolin, used in the making of pottery. The first iron mine in Australia operated in the 1870s and 1880s. The fence surrounding St Patrick's Cathedral in Ballarat is one known example of the use of Lal Lal iron.

Other minerals mined in the district were gold, brown coal for gas production and clay for brick-making.