

Donnelly Village Heritage Trail

DONNELLY RIVER VILLAGE
HERITAGE TRAIL
A project of Friends of Donnelly Village Inc.

Life in The Donnelly

Milltowns were independent and self-reliant. Most neighbours were also your friends.

You grew most of your food or got it from the forest or the village store. The kids went to the local school and every household had at least one millworker.

The calendar at The Donnelly was busy with social activities and events throughout the year.

"They call it Britten's Hill, when we all used to make hill trolleys and we'd have a race down the hill with our friends, skin taken off our elbows, knees."
Patricia Reeve, Interview January 2017

Children swam in the dam and bush play...

» Outside Cottage 33, Monohan Lodge. Image: Matty Thompson

The oval, tennis courts and basketball courts were well used, with the children and adults of the village pitting themselves against competitors from the neighbouring towns

Interpretive Signage on the Heritage Trail

The Friends of Donnelly Village came together formally as a not for profit organisation in 2014 to focus on research, records and preservation of the village history. The town of Donnelly is an important mill town on the Donnelly River in rural South West WA. The town and river runs primarily through state forest reserves with viticulture, horticulture, dairy, grazing and tourism as the key regional livelihoods.

By the early 1960s, Donnelly River Mill was considered to be one of the most efficient timber mills in Australia, operated by 120 men and now heritage listed.

One of the official registered objectives of Friends of Donnelly Village was to develop interactive trails, displays and events. In 2019 Signs & Lines, in partnership with Brandino, developed a suite of interpretive totem and monolith signage to be placed at prominent points of interest.

Why Interpretive Signage?

Typically interpretive signage features location information displayed via interesting designs, captivating stories, stunning artwork, beautiful photography and eye catching detail.

This type of signage is often used to commemorate or showcase a historic project, tourist destination,

walking trail, native fauna/flora, environmental area or indigenous heritage site.

Friends of Donnelly Village were seeking interpretive signage to relay information about the heritage of this historic town and mill which dates back to the English settlement in the 1830s. The signs tell visitors a story explaining the origin of the mill, the impact of the local environment, societal impact and other cultural nuances associated with the mill.



The Donnelly 'Heritage Trail' Theme

Interpretive signage often has a narrative with an over-riding theme – in this case the 'Heritage Trail' tells the history of the area following the introduction of the saw mill in the mid 1950's. The three main areas for interpretation are:

- **CULTURAL** – stories about society (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artefacts); intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity);
- **HISTORICAL** – stories about people and heritage;
- **NATURAL** – stories about nature including plants and animals and anecdotes about places for tourism.

Signage Design

The interpretive signage suite included 4 sign types:

- Single sided free standing totem - 350mm x 1500mm free standing fabricated and painted with a matt 2 pac paint. 7 signs in total.

- Double sided free standing 700mm x 1500mm free standing monolith sign with digitally printed artwork with matt laminated and painted with 2 pac paint. 4 signs in total.
- Triple free standing - single sided sign x 1500mm free standing monolith sign. Digitally printed artwork with matt laminate and painted 2 pac paint. One sign.
- Wall mounted sign 350mm x 820mm with digitally printed artwork with matt laminate and painted with with matt 2 pack paint. One sign.

The fourteen signs were designed to look like a family of signage – instantly recognisable to visitors in the area with a constant look and feel marking the Heritage Trail around the area.

The artistic approach was spear headed by designer, Ric Cairns, at Fremantle creative consultancy, Brandino. From this Signs & Lines developed detailed shop drawings.

Signs & Lines delivered and installed the signage into concrete footings with the official launch of the Heritage Trail in November 2019.





More on Friends of Donnelly River

Donnelly River Village is situated between the southwest towns of Nannup, Bridgetown and Manjimup. The mill processed 25,000 super feet of timber per day. More information on this important heritage conservation group can be found at: <http://www.friendsofdonnelly.org.au/>

Take your Sign Message to the Next Level


We help customers select their style and design to create a wow factor. There's no doubt that interpretive signage will take your messages to the next level!

Our team of professionals are just a phone call away. Talk to us today about how high impact interpretive signs can add value and enhance your visitor experience. Use of interactive digital signage is also great way to engage guests to your facility – let them find information through self-exploration.


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The Wheatley Forestry Settlement

Soon after the mill was established at Donnelly River in 1951, the State Forests Department built seven family cottages and four single men's huts in the forest on this side of the road. Trees were planted, gardens were fenced, and a community was established.



John Tillman digging out the dam in 1956.





The diving platform was very popular. 1960s.

A picnic area was established, and the "Swimming Dam" became a favourite social meeting place where children frolicked at leisure, learnt to swim and participated in swimming carnivals.

In 1956, Bunnings built a water supply dam alongside the Wheatley Forestry Settlement to supply the Donnelly River Mill settlement.

The dam was used as a swimming pool, with sand carted from Busselton to create an artificial beach.

To discuss your own signage strategy please don't hesitate to get in touch.