

# STEAVENSON FALLS



# MARYSVILLE



**NATURE  
SERIES**

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# **STEAVENSON FALLS**

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# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## INTRODUCTION

**Name:** Steavenson Falls  
**Location:** Falls Road, Marysville  
7 km south of Marysville  
**Height:** 82 metres  
**GPS:** S37.52013 E145.76152

A waterfall located south of Marysville at the southern end of Falls Road. It has been a major local tourism attraction ever since it was discovered in 1864 and it is our District's most popular waterfall.



Steavenson Falls, three years before  
the Black Saturday Bushfires.

Steavenson Falls (also spelt 'Stevenson's Falls' in early newspapers) is a large waterfall located just upstream from Marysville on the Steavenson River in Central Victoria. The township of Marysville was previously referred to as Maryville and Steavenson's Crossing, and was an active small community by 1863. It was first surveyed as a township in 1864 by Assistant Government Surveyor George McDonald, and the first Post Office was established at 'Maryville' on 1 March 1865, under the charge of Postmaster Robert Mayne. Steavenson Falls was first named McDonald Falls after Surveyor George McDonald, the first European to closely examine the Falls. He visited the Falls in late September 1864, then wrote a letter detailing the Falls which was published in the Melbourne *Herald* on Friday 7 October 1864, and in other publications soon after.



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## INTRODUCTION

In 1866 the Falls were opened up to the public when Government Minister Gavin Duffy directed a track be cleared to the Falls. It eventually became a significant attraction for visitors from Melbourne, and its appeal increased further as road conditions improved, the motor vehicle replaced the horse and cart and travel time between Melbourne and Marysville decreased.

The introduction of guesthouses along the route between Narbethong (then called Nar-Be-Thing) and Marysville made visiting Marysville and the Falls even easier, as visitors could stay and enjoy the other natural features in and around Marysville.



**A colourised version of a black and white image of Steavenson Falls circa 1900**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2012



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## INTRODUCTION

### George Thomas McDonald

The naming of Steavenson Falls as McDonald Falls, which has been written about by other writers previously, rely in part upon a letter which was published in the *Melbourne Herald* on Friday 7 October 1864 (and in numerous other publications soon afterwards). The letter was written by Assistant Surveyor George McDonald, who was working and living at Marysville at the time, after being sent to the growing community by his employer, Commissioner Roads and Bridges, John Steavenson. At that time Steavenson was working from Melbourne and had numerous Surveyors under his direction. At Marysville, McDonald worked from a small wooden office referred to on early maps as the 'Roads Engineers Survey Office'. The structure was erected near the old township's centre and beside the modern day Murchison Street near the current Visitor Information Centre.

On Sunday 25 September 1864, presumably in his own time, McDonald trekked up the Steavenson River Valley in search of a magnificent waterfall he had been told existed a few miles upstream. After finding the Falls, he wrote a letter which he submitted to the media. His letter describes the waterfall and how he found them with the help of another local. McDonald describes how the unnamed local guide had only seen the Falls from a distance. His letter was first published in the *Melbourne Herald* on Friday 7 October 1864 and reproduced in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on Saturday 8 October 1864. It reads in part:

*It gives me great pleasure to inform you of a magnificent waterfall which exists in this neighbourhood, and which I believe surpasses anything of the kind in Victoria. I believe I am the first European privileged to examine it closely, although it has been seen at a distance by one or two others; indeed it is to one of these persons that I am indebted for the information which induced me to visit the place. The fall is on the*

### Steavenson Falls circa 1920

Photographer J P Campbell - Courtesy Rod Falconer





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## INTRODUCTION

Steavenson Falls in 2005



*Steavenson River, about two-miles above the present crossing of the road from Melbourne to Wood's Point, the place at which I lately surveyed a township.*

According to local history, the name 'McDonald Falls' was subsequently marked on a map prepared by McDonald and sent to his superior John Steavenson. However the name was then changed to 'Steavenson Falls' by either John Steavenson himself, or someone else at head office. At this time the river was already referred to as Steavenson River, so naming the waterfall with the same name would have simplified future references by maintaining a logical naming convention.

Evidence of the original name 'McDonald Falls' can be seen on an early 1866 map labelled 'County of Evelyn', available at the State Library. This map is reproduced later in this factsheet. The 'McDonald Falls' tag can also be seen on a second early map, based on this first map and lithographed in 1872. We have also reproduced this map later. Other mud-maps also showing 'McDonald Falls' exist for those wishing to research the early history of the Falls further.





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## INTRODUCTION

### **John Steavenson**

Steavenson Falls, Steavenson River and the early Steavenson Hotel are all believed to be named after John Steavenson. John was a public servant who worked for the Roads and Bridges Commission and served as both Assistant Commissioner Roads and Bridges and Commissioner Roads and Bridges. His primary connection with Marysville was in relation to the establishment of the 'Yarra Track', a significant early road project linking Melbourne with the goldfields of the Upper Goulburn River and the township of Woods Point.

While it is widely accepted amongst historians that Steavenson Falls was named after John Steavenson, we are yet to find any reliable evidence confirming this claim. It is also commonly promoted in books and on websites that Marysville was named after his wife Mary, and while possibly true, we have also been unable to confirm this. In fact, research has produced a contrary view that relies upon an early author who lived within that period and was a highly respected individual. Our research is continuing on this.

### **Steavenson Falls today**

Steavenson Falls has an elegant bush setting and is located deep in a picturesque valley. Both the scenic drive and the walking track from Marysville to the Falls are highly picturesque and prepare the visitor for what is to come - magnificent 82 metre high Falls. In 1972 a spotlight was installed at the site using electricity from a medium sized generator further downstream.

Steavenson Falls can be viewed from either side of the Steavenson River, below the Falls on the footbridge crossing the river and from the top viewing platform from where you can also take in the entire valley. Downstream from the Falls and easily accessible via good grade tracks is a small hydro electric generator which survived the fire with little damage and is still used today to supply electricity. Steavenson Falls and the beautiful Steavenson Valley can also be viewed from the steel viewing platform located at the top of the Falls. Access to the platform is via a track starting near the Falls and takes around 20 minutes of moderate uphill walking.



A photograph of a waterfall cascading over rocks, with green foliage on the left side.

# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## INTRODUCTION

**The name 'Steavenson' is officially registered on VicNames today in relation to:**

<b>Steavenson</b>	Parish
<b>Little Steavenson River</b>	Stream/Waterway
<b>Steavenson Falls</b>	Waterfall/Rapids
<b>Steavenson Falls Reserve</b>	Reserve
<b>Steavenson River</b>	Stream/River/Waterway

Sadly there are no names honouring George McDonald in or around Marysville. But waterfall enthusiast Travis Easton, author of the definitive three volume set on Melbourne Waterfalls, is working towards having a waterfall located 300 metres above Steavenson Falls, named after George McDonald.





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## INTRODUCTION

### **The unspoken history of John Steavenson**

It is not commonly known or widely promoted, but John Steavenson left Australia in August 1876 under a cloud of great suspicion. This suspicion related to allegations of criminal conduct connected to the Toorak St. John's Church Choir. His crimes were said to be so severe that they were not able to be mentioned in newspapers.

Our research has not been able to uncover the nature of the allegations, but what can be verified is that John Steavenson quietly and secretly left Australia. Once he was safely in England, his wife was successful in her application for a divorce from him. We are not sure what was the catalyst for the divorce, but we do know that at the divorce proceedings, Mary successfully established the fact that John had never consummated their marriage of 15 years.

We have also found that his family had distanced themselves from him and that he later travelled to Labrador, Canada, where he died on 14 April 1895, isolated from his family.

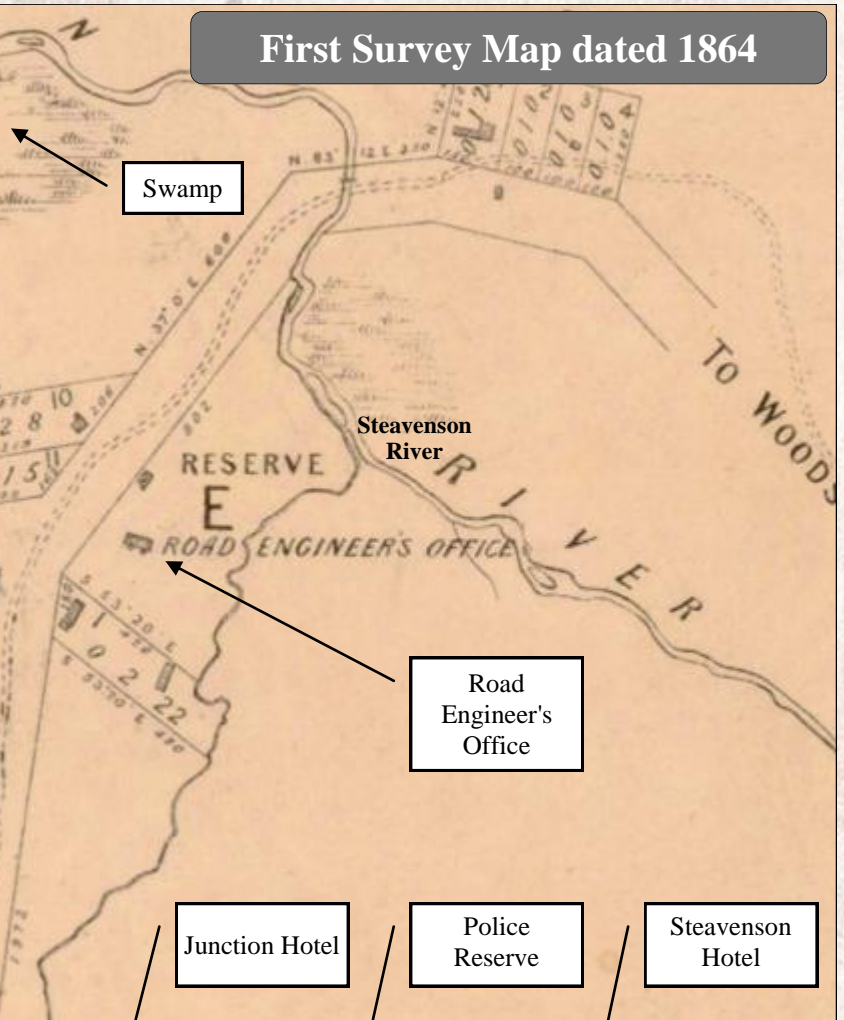
John never returned to Australia to answer the allegations, even though he was officially requested to do so by the State Premier at that time.



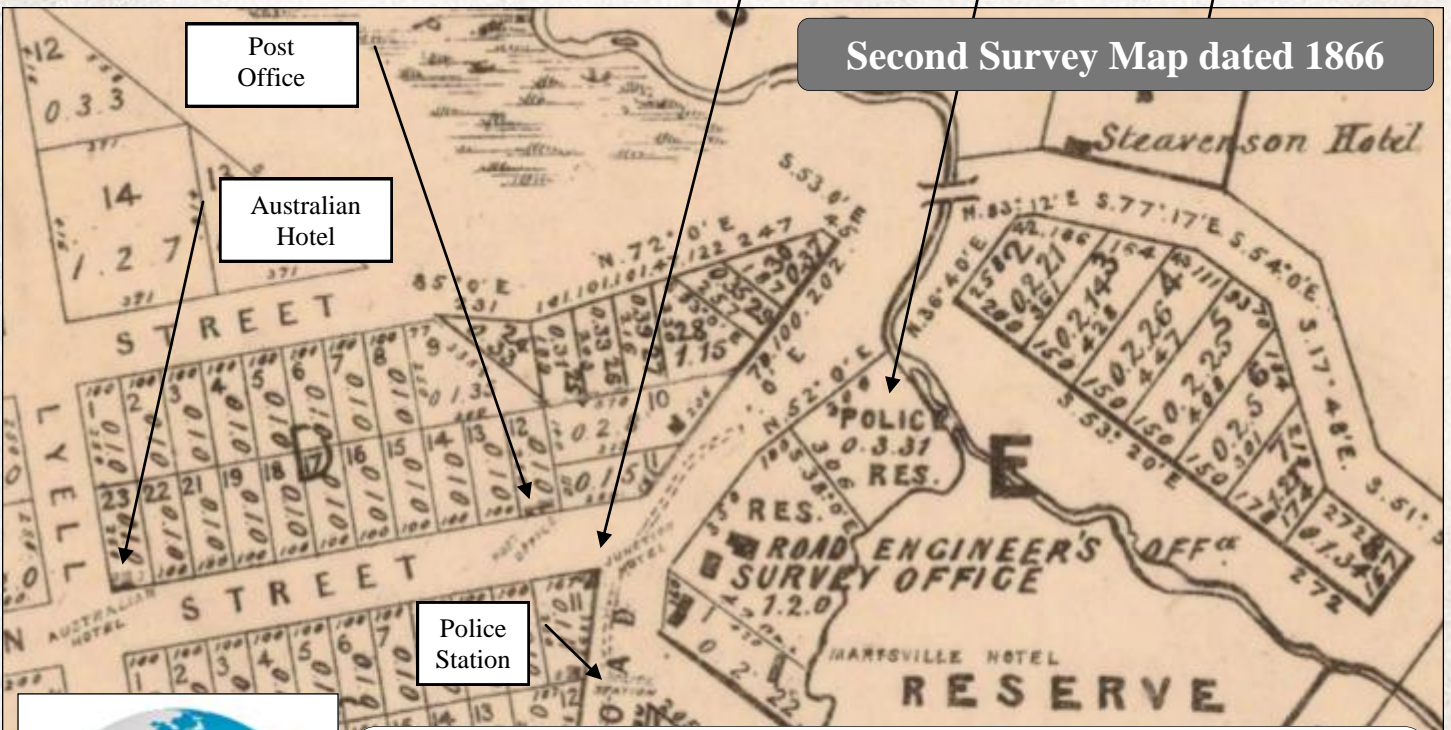
# MAPS OF MARYSVILLE

It is widely reported that Steavenson Crossing (where Marysville stands) was officially named after John Steavenson, who once served as both Assistant Commissioner Roads and Bridges and Commissioner Roads and Bridges. Steavenson Hotel (shown on the right of the bottom map), Steavenson Falls and Steavenson River were also reportedly named after him. Marysville is said to have been named after his wife Mary. While all of this is widely accepted, we are unable to find definitive evidence to confirm these claims. We do know that the original name of the Falls was McDonald Falls, which was later changed to Steavenson Falls.

First Survey Map dated 1864



Second Survey Map dated 1866



John Steavenson fled Australia on 23 August 1876 aboard the clipper *Lincolnshire* under a dark cloud, with newspapers refusing to identify his heinous crimes. Once in England his wife Mary successfully divorced him, claiming that in 15 years John had never consummated the marriage. Newspapers reported that should he ever return to Australia he would be arrested and made to answer for his alleged criminal behaviour (which relate to the Toorak St John's Church Choir). Although he was officially requested to return to Australia to answer the allegations, he failed to do so and instead moved to Labrador, Canada where he eventually died in 1895.



# TIMELINE

BASIC TIMELINE OF EVENTS





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## TIMELINE

- 1827** John Steavenson was born.
- 26 April 1858** John Steavenson was appointed Vice [Assistant] Commissioner of Roads and Bridges, under Peter Paul Labertouche. (*Government Gazette*, Monday 26 April 1858).
- 22 September 1858** John Steavenson referred to as 'Commissioner Roads and Bridges'. (*Bendigo Advertiser*, Wednesday 22 September 1858).
- 12 January 1859** John Steavenson referred to as 'President of the Roads and Bridges'. (*Mount Alexander Mail*, Wednesday 12 January 1859).
- 30 October 1862** John Steavenson married Mary Martha Murphy at St John's Church in Toorak.
- 6 August 1863** John Steavenson was referred to as Assistant Commissioner Roads and Bridges, suggesting he was no longer acting as Commissioner. (*Bendigo Advertiser*, Friday 7 August 1863).
- Mid 1864** Government Assistant Surveyor George Thomas McDonald was sent to the locality later known as Marysville, to survey the township as a part of the establishment of the Yarra Track, a track which ran from Melbourne to the goldfields of the Upper Goulburn River and specifically the township of Woods Point. The survey was also done in the lead-up to the first land sales. George worked under John Steavenson of the Government's Roads and Bridges Department. His subsequent survey dated 1864 was the first Survey Map of Marysville. During his work George operated from the 'Road Engineers Office'.
- 25 September 1864** Assistant Government Surveyor George Thomas McDonald, the first Surveyor of Marysville, conducted what is thought to be **the first close inspection of what he initially named McDonald Falls**. The Falls later became known as Steavenson Falls. In a letter to the Melbourne *Herald*, and repeated in the *Bendigo Advertiser* the following day, McDonald acknowledges that some others had already seen the waterfall from a distance and he was indebted to one of those for making him aware of





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## TIMELINE

the waterfall. (*Bendigo Advertiser*, Saturday 8 October 1864).

**6 December 1864**

Mention of 'Steavenson Crossing' on the Yarra Track'. (*The Argus*, Tuesday 6 December 1864).

**6–7 December 1864**

First Land Sales at Marysville were held on Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 December 1864. (*The Argus*, Tuesday 6 December 1864).

**21 February 1865**

Mention of Maryville (note old spelling). (*The Age*, Tuesday 21 February 1865).

**9 May 1865**

The 'Cataract of the Steavenson' mentioned in *The Age*. (*The Age*, Tuesday 9 May 1865).

**29 August 1865**

Land sold at Marysville. (*The Argus*, Tuesday 29 August 1865).

**16 March 1866**

Marysville's second Survey Map was compiled by Assistant Government Surveyor George McDonald.

**1866**

Mr Charles Gavin Duffy (1816-1903) - first laid in a track to Steavenson Falls while acting as Minister of Lands (reported in *The Argus* and referred to as 'Stevenson' Falls). (*The Argus*, Saturday 20 September 1884).

**8 April 1871**

The Government made the decision to amalgamate the Department of Roads and Bridges with the Department of Railways. John Steavenson, the current Assistant of Roads and Bridges, was appointed head of the departments.

**January 1872**

John Steavenson gravely seriously ill after visiting Tasmania and suffering a serious attack of rheumatism (which has worsened upon his return). It was stated that he was the well-known Assistant-Commissioner of Roads and Bridges and Secretary of the Railway Department. (*The Ballarat Star*, Tuesday 16 January 1872).

**16 March 1872**

*The Australian* newspaper published an article by 'The Sketcher'





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## TIMELINE

who spoke of 'Stevenson Falls'. It is one of the earlier newspaper articles that spell the Falls incorrectly as 'Stevenson Falls'. (*The Australian*, Saturday 16 March 1872).

**12 April 1872**

Friends of John Steavenson were reportedly glad to hear he was recovering well from the accident which had compelled him to recently quit his official duties. He left his bed this week. (*The Argus*, 12 April 1872).

**22 August 1876**

It was reported that John applied for a 12 month leave of absence three weeks ago, which was granted and that he had lied about the reasons behind his leave request. It is also reported that he left Australia aboard the clipper *Lincolnshire*, as rumors of an 'ugly nature' were spreading about him. There were subtle suggestions that friends in high places helped him make his escape to London. (*Portland Guardian*, 22 August 1876).

**22 August 1876**

A charge was brought against John Steavenson and referred to as an 'un-nameable offence (aggravated in consequence of St. John's Church, Toorak)'. The report states that John had asked for 12 months leave. It was also stated how it was thought that he would be arrested on the ship before it left Port Phillip Heads [which did not occur]. (*Colac Herald*, 22 August 1876).

**24 August 1876**

The sudden departure was reported regarding John Steavenson, Secretary of the Victorian Railways and Assistant commissioner of Roads and Bridges. It was reported he 'left by clipper *Lincolnshire* yesterday' for unknown reasons. A strong feeling in the community exists and claims were made that he should have been arrested after 'startling' rumors arose. (*Hobart Mercury*, 24 August 1876).

**1 September 1876**

It was reported that John Steavenson could be forced to return to Australia to face allegations against him. It was stated that if the allegations were proven true, he 'could not remain in the Government Service'. (*The Argus*, 1 September 1876).

**9 September 1876**

Claims against the Government of the day were made in relation





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## TIMELINE

to people in power allowing John Steavenson to slip away to London. The article made mention of a letter being sent to John requesting him to return to Australia to face charges. It stated that 'Of the nature of the crime which Mr. Steavenson is alleged to have committed we purposely refrain to give even a hint. It is too bad to be written about.' (*St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian*, 9 September 1876).

- 1877** John Steavenson's wife successfully applied for a divorce, claiming John had never consummated their 15 year marriage.
- 11 August 1877** John Steavenson is struck off the roll of the 'Civil Service of the Colony'. (*Hobart Mercury*, 11 August 1877).
- 13 November 1878** It is reported that a divorce settlement is reached between John Steavenson and his wife Mary Murphy.
- 20 September 1884** Marysville described as having three hotels, a blacksmith shop and a few scattered cottages (*The Argus*, 20 September 1884).
- 14 April 1895** John Steavenson died at Labrador, Canada.
- 1939** The area surrounding the Steavenson Falls was totally destroyed by the 1939 Bushfire.
- 9 January 1968** On this day seven teenagers were bush walking on a well established track near the bottom of the east side of the Steavenson Waterfall, when four of them were killed by a large section of a mountain ash tree that fell.
- 1972** A floodlight was installed at the site and powered by a generator below the Falls.
- 4 September 1974** Ten year old Damian Peter McKenzie of Cobden in Victoria, went missing during a trip to Steavenson Falls. His body was never found. The missing boy sparked what was the largest hunt for a missing child in the state's history.





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## TIMELINE

- 9 January 2009** Marysville, as well as the area surrounding the Steavenson Falls were totally destroyed by the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfire.
- 2010** Artworkz commenced work on this factsheet.
- 2013** The Steavenson Falls area was re-opened to the public. Completely new infrastructure at the site made it the best waterfall experience in the district.
- July 2013** eSplash66 published with feature on Steavenson Falls.
- 2015** A parking fee was introduced for parking at Steavenson Falls.
- 29 July 2016** eSplash156 published with feature on Steavenson Falls.
- 25 May 2018** eSplash196 with feature on the Tree Fern Gully Nature Walk to Steavenson Falls, which included photographs of the Falls.
- 31 October 2018** During an Artworkz breakfast the day after her talk at the final HistoryCafe for 2018, Dr. Ruth Pullin showed us an image of a painting by Eugene von Guerard titled *Steavenson Falls* and dated 1863. We instantly recognised the painting as Snobs Creek Falls (which was originally called Bunyarrambite Falls). This was confirmed when it was realised it was almost identical to one of two sketches of Snobs Creek Falls that he sketched during his trip along the Goulburn River in 1862 (shown in this factsheet). Ruth later reported this to the State Library of New South Wales, who own the painting.
- 8 June 2020** Steavenson Falls was closed due to an excessive number of visitors. This happened on a Public Holiday whilst Covid-19 restrictions were still in force and people were not socially distancing. The car-park was full and cars were parked along the roadside all the way back to Marysville. It was estimated that after the road was closed by Forest Rangers and Police that approximately 1000 cars were turned around. This is believed to be the first time in the history of Steavenson Falls that the reserve has been closed due to overuse.



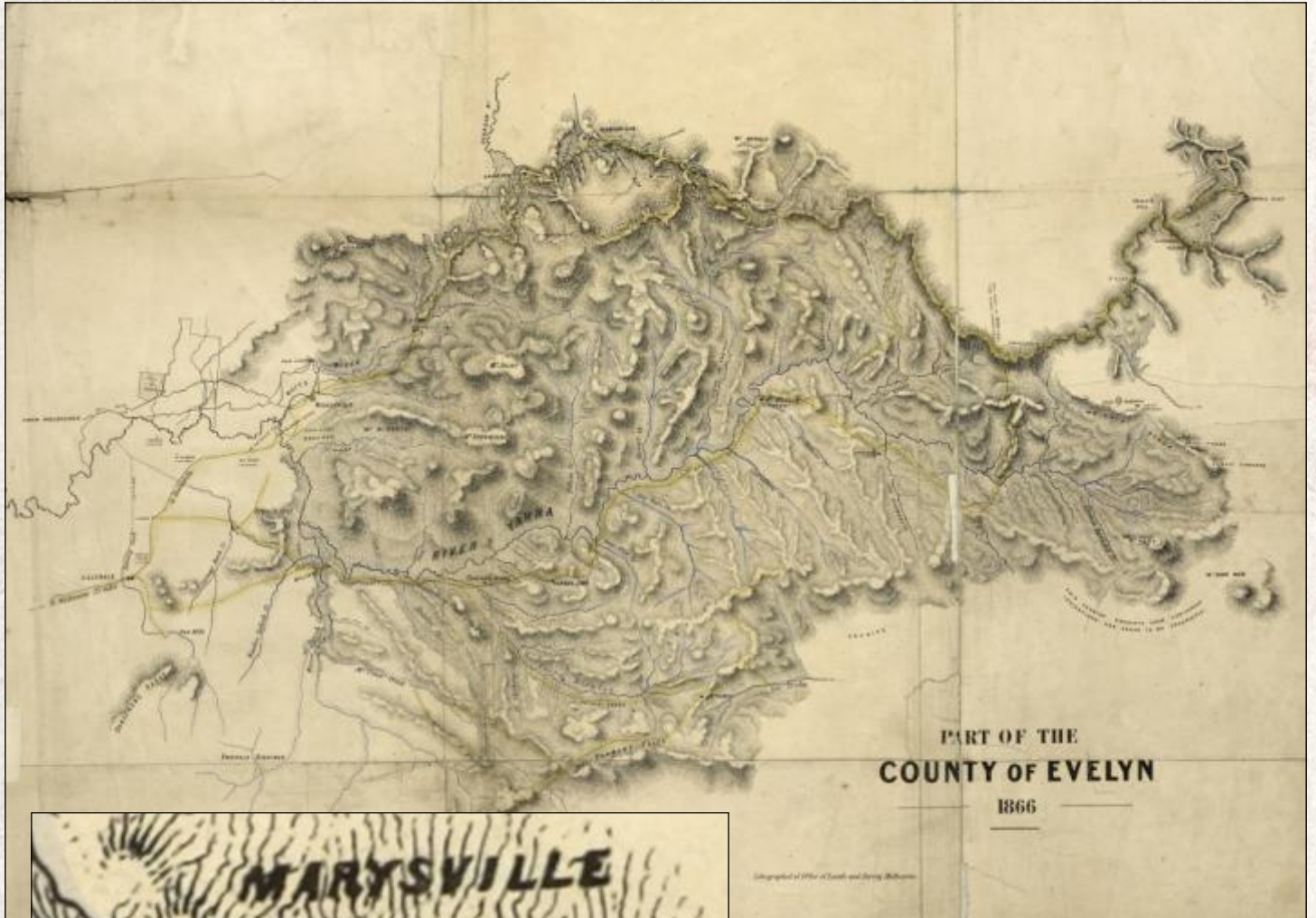
# GALLERY

RELATED IMAGERY



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**1866 Country of Evelyn Map showing the original name as McDonald Falls.**

Steavenson Falls was first named McDonald Falls, after George T. McDonald, an early Government Surveyor to the Marysville area. While George admits in a letter that he was not the first to see the Falls, he was the first European to closely inspect the area of the Falls and make it publically known in the media (*Melbourne Herald*).

Courtesy State Library Victoria 2018



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Lithograph dated 19 January 1872  
showing the original name as  
McDonald Falls.**

This map shows that the name McDonald  
Falls was still in use by January 1872.

Courtesy State Library Victoria 2018



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls circa 1890**  
Courtesy State Library Victoria



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



STEAVENSON'S FALLS.

**Marysville in January 1898**

The Australasian - Saturday 15 January 1898  
Courtesy National Library Australia



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



*Steavenson Falls  
Marysville*

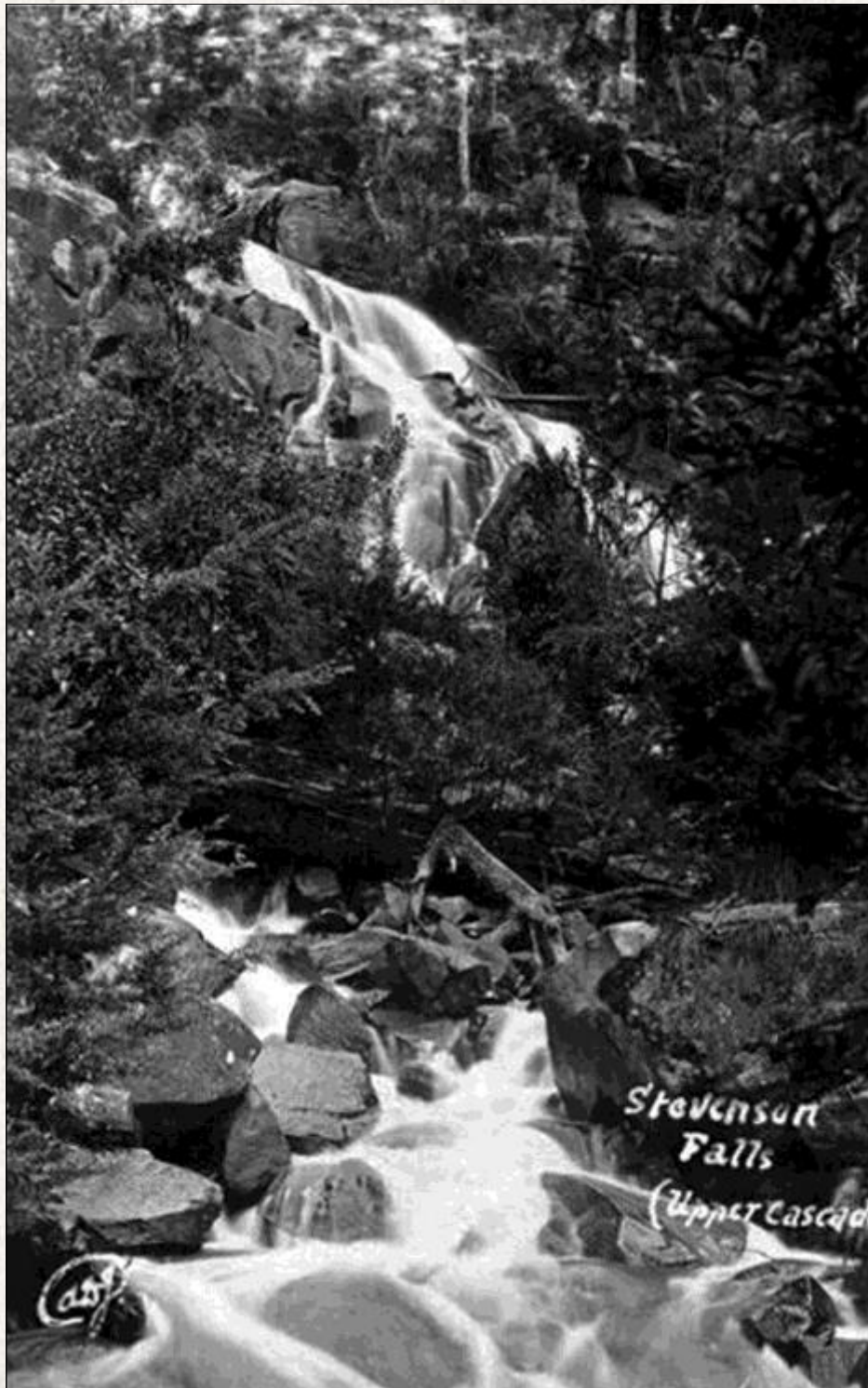
**Steavenson Falls circa 1910**

Courtesy Kelly Petersen and David & Debbie Hibbert



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY

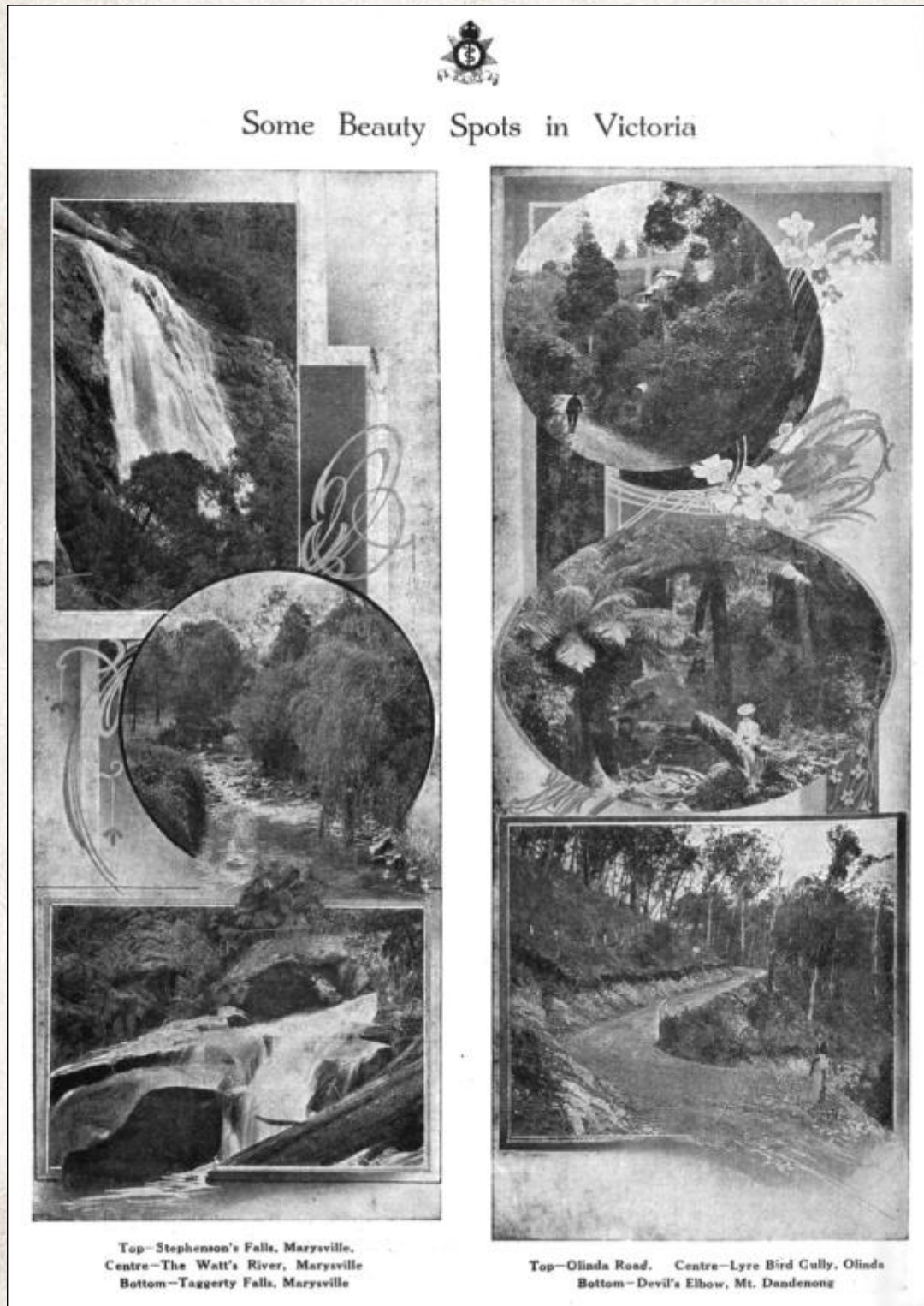


**Steavenson Falls circa 1910**  
Courtesy Tony Ballino 2012



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Some Beauty Spots in Victoria - Steavenson Falls in 1919**

M & H Magazine - 8 April 1919 - Courtesy National Library Australia



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls circa 1920**

Photographer J P Campbell  
Courtesy Rod Falconer 2010



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls circa 1920**

Photographer J P Campbell - Courtesy Rod Falconer 2010



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Rose Series Postcards of Steavenson Falls circa 1920**

All photographs courtesy Simone Adams 2011  
Photographer George Rose



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Rose Series Postcards of Steavenson Falls circa 1920**

Courtesy State Library Victoria.  
Photographer George Rose



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls circa 1920**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2013



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls circa 1920**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2012



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



MURRAY VIEWS NO. 8. STEAVENSONS FALLS, MARYSVILLE, VIC.

**Steavenson Falls circa 1930**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2012



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



MURRAY VIEWS NO. 29. STEAVENSONS FALLS, MARYSVILLE, VIC.

**Steavenson Falls circa 1930**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2012



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Coloured Valentine's photos of Steavenson Falls circa 1930**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2013



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Coloured Valentine's photos of Steavenson Falls circa 1930**

Courtesy Kelly Petersen and David & Debbie Hibbert 2018



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



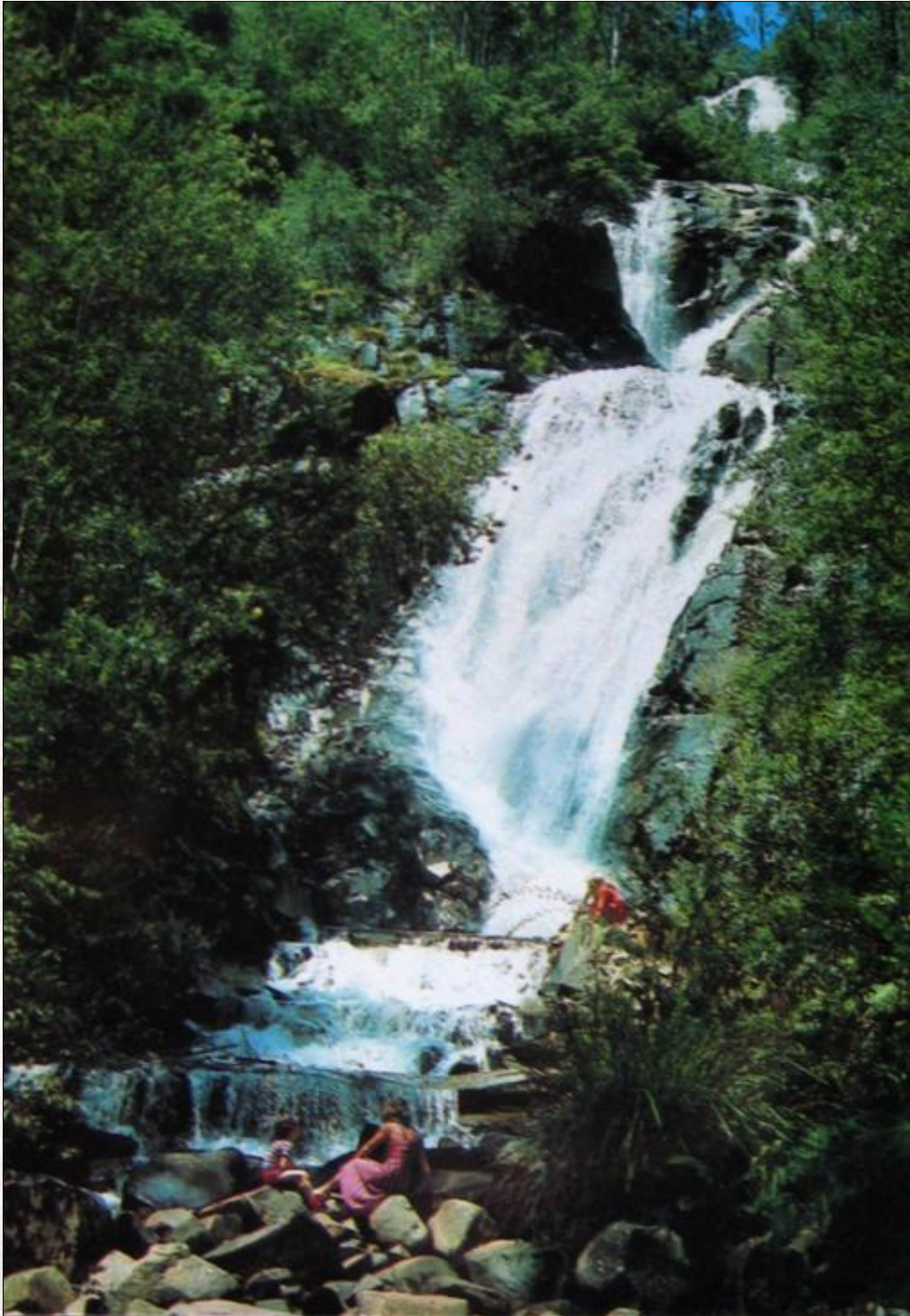
**Coloured photograph of Steavenson Falls circa 1930**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2012



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls circa 1980**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2014



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls under lights circa 1980**

Courtesy Tony Ballino 2017  
Photographer George Rose - Rose Stereograph Collection



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls in 2005**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Wooden bridge just below the Steavenson Falls in 2005**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls as seen from the wooden bridge below the Falls in 2005**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls in 2005 as seen from the viewing area**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls in 2005**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**The walk to and from the Falls in 2005**



**On 17 November 2007 a single lightning strike shook the town of Marysville.  
The resulting fire from the strike was contained by air support and crews on the ground.  
This was possibly the last fire this close to Marysville prior to Black Saturday.**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Just after midday on 17 November 2007, a single lightning strike hit near the town of Marysville. A resulting fire was contained by air support and crews on the ground. This was the last serious fire in bushland this close to Marysville prior to Black Saturday.**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Post Black Saturday - Steavenson River Valley just below the Falls in January 2010**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Post Black Saturday - Steavenson River Valley just below the Falls in January 2010**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson River Valley just below the Falls  
in January 2010**



**Another walkway view in January 2010**



**(Right) The Power Station below the Falls**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**(Top) Walkway view**

**(Right) Power Station**





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Post Black Saturday - Steavenson Falls walkway views**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Post Black Saturday - Steavenson Falls walkway views**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Post Black Saturday view from the car park**



**View of the floodlight which  
was installed in 1972**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Post Black Saturday - Steavenson Falls walkway views**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY

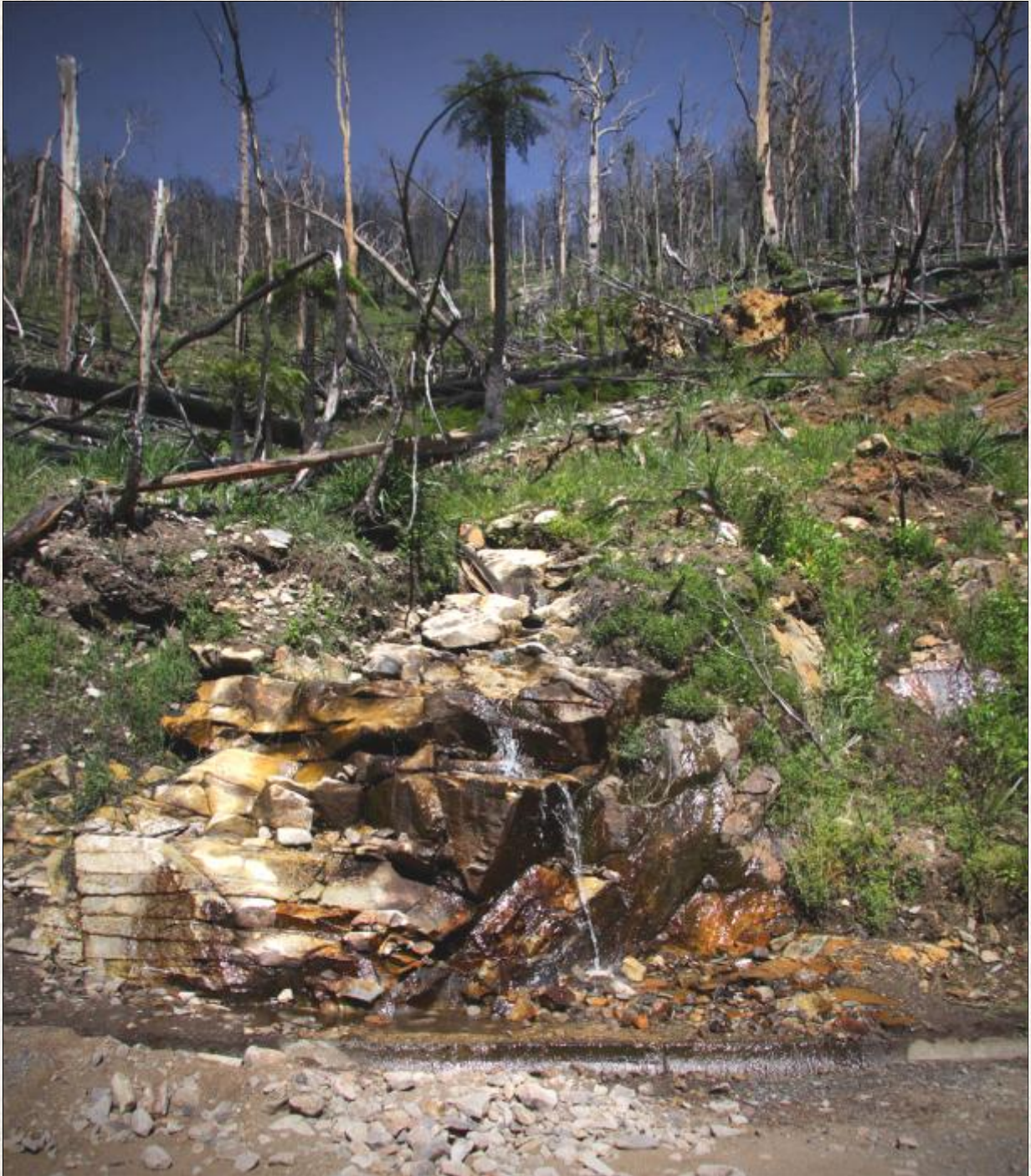


**The bus used during the 2009-2010 Christmas Break to ferry people to the Falls. The bus ran every hour on the hour between 10 am and 4 pm on weekends only. There was no other access to the Falls at this time.**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**The small waterfall in the carpark area at Steavenson Falls in 2010**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET



Regeneration in bushland around  
Marysville 11 months after the  
2009 Black Saturday Bushfires.





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls in June 2011**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls in June 2011**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls in June 2011**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Steavenson Falls on 5 May 2018**



# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## GALLERY



**Below Steavenson Falls on 5 May 2018**



# NEWSPAPERS

RELATED ARTICLES





# HISTORIC FACTSHEET

## NEWSPAPERS

### DISCOVERY OF A NEW WATERFALL.

The following letter has been received by a gentleman in Melbourne:—

Steavenson River, 27th September.—It gives me great pleasure to inform you of a magnificent water fall which exists in this neighborhood, and which I believe surpasses anything of the kind in Victoria. I believe I am the first or one of the first Europeans privileged to examine it closely, although it has been seen at a distance by one or two others; indeed it is to one of these persons that I am indebted for the information which induced me to visit the place. The fall is on the Steavenson River, about two miles above the present crossing of the road from Melbourne to Wood's Point, the place at which I lately surveyed a township. The total height of the waterfall is at least one hundred and fifty feet, but it is divided into two parts, of which the upper portion is about sixty, and the lower ninety feet. The river at the fall is about fifteen or twenty feet wide, and has a considerable body of water which comes down in a mass of foam and spray over a granite precipice, having a vertical inclination of about eighty degrees. The variety of foliage produced by the sassafras, blackwood, acacia, musk, hazel, gum, tea-tree, fern-tree, and numerous other trees and shrubs in the vicinity, adds greatly to the beauty of the scene, but renders it somewhat difficult to obtain a good general view of the falls. Some of the sassafras and tea-tree attain an immense size, both in height and girth. As it was rather late when I visited the falls last Sunday afternoon, I had not time to make even a rough sketch, and, indeed, the scene is so grand that I should at any time feel it to be little short of presumption on my part to make the attempt. However, when the summer has fairly commenced, I trust that some of our distinguished artists will consider the place worth visiting, and we may then hope for a picture worthy of the subject. I may mention that the Steavenson is about sixty miles from Melbourne, forty of which, namely, to New Chum, is at present travelled by coach. The remaining twenty miles only require money to be made available for the same kind of conveyance, as sufficiently easy grades have been obtained by the road-engineer.—

Bendigo Advertiser  
Saturday 8 October 1864  
Courtesy National Library Australia

A letter published in 1864 describing the first close inspection of Steavenson Falls by Surveyor George Thomas McDonald.

George originally named the waterfall McDonald Falls, but this was later changed to Steavenson Falls by person/s unknown.

In his letter he acknowledges that he was not the first discoverer of the Falls, as others had previously seen the waterfall from afar. But he was the first to inspect it closely and then make them known to the general public.

Bendigo Advertiser  
Saturday 8 October 1864  
Courtesy National Library Australia



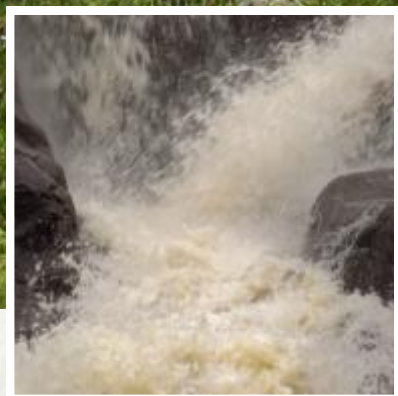
# eSPLASH MEDIA ARTICLES

ARTICLES FROM THE eSPLASH eMAGAZINE



# STEAVENSON FALLS

THE PRIDE OF MARYSVILLE  
PUBLISHED JULY 2013 - eSPLASH66



## **The beautiful Steavenson Falls**

After heavy rain, we headed for the mighty Steavenson Falls at Marysville. They were magnificent and as we discovered - they were worthy of a visit - even when wet!



## STEAVENSON FALLS

*These two photographs were taken from similar angles and distances as much as was possible. This comparison is not designed to compare water flows or looks, rather simply to show that the Lower Snobs Creek Falls is a gem of luxurious splendour that is in want of easier public access - as was possible in the late 1800s through to the late 1930s.*

## LOWER SNOBS CREEK FALLS





The middle of the Falls included a small pile of stones placed on a dangerous ledge

















**Top of Falls Lookout**

One Way 800 m | 15 - 30 mins



The upper viewing platform as viewed from below the Falls



STEAVENTON FALLS, 2014



ARTWORKZ

GET UP - GET OUT - GET EXPLORING



# STEAVENSON FALLS, 2014



GET UP - GET OUT - GET EXPLORING



# STEAVENSON FALLS

MARYSVILLE - AUGUST 2016

PUBLISHED 12 AUGUST 2016 - ESPLASH156



## Steavenson Falls

Steavenson Falls is located near Marysville in the Marysville State Forest and Steavenson Falls Natural Features and Scenic Reserve and is an outstanding visual delight for waterfall lovers and tourists.





## - A trip to Marysville -



Winter is such a great season for so many reasons, though not always for the cold - unless you are heading for the snow. However, one area that is outstanding during winter is Waterfalls. They are generally surrounded by gorgeous lush winter flora, adorned in winter colours. The waterfalls themselves are often a torrent of water that is usually missing during the warmer months and creates a spectacular and impressive show. The force of the Falls becomes something encapsulating in their own right, ensuring they are highly photographic and awe inspiring.

But before heading to the Falls, I needed breakfast. I ate at a Marysville café, enjoyed my breakfast and coffee and watched as tourists came and went, enjoy the magnificence that is Marysville - even on a cool morning.















I arrived at Steavenson Falls carpark just after 10 am, while a light rain was falling. But it was not enough to stop people walking to and from the waterfall. One father decided to return to his car to collect a set of brightly coloured gum boots for his daughter, no doubt feeling that her sneakers may become too wet. As it turned out, the rain was short lived.

The car park area of Steavenson Falls is in excellent condition and includes the lesser 'Little Steavenson Falls', toilet facilities, interpretive signage and a large viewing platform extending over the Steavenson River valley. On this trip, it also included DELWP personnel performing basic maintenance and upkeep to the toilet facility and area.

The Falls were in full glory, as can be seen. There was an exuberance of water gushing over the top of the Falls, ensured the view was as spectacular as I had hoped both from below and above for these children.

I highly recommend Steavenson Falls and a visit to Marysville. The area holds much to do and is always beautiful.



Water in abundance at the top





Base of the Falls







# OUR HIDDEN MEMORIALS

## MARYSVILLE STEAVENSON FALLS MEMORIAL



On 9 January 1968, seven teenagers who were staying at the Marylands Guesthouse, were out bush walking on a well established section of track near the bottom of Steavenson Waterfall. Sadly four of them were killed by a section of trunk from a dead mountain ash. The tree was

killed during the 1939 Bushfires, but had managed to stay standing. But on this day the top section broke free about twelve metres from the ground, fell to the ground and rolled down the steep gully wall over the teenagers. The section of the trunk was around one metre in diameter. Four of the teenagers were killed, while three escaped death. The father of one teenager was quoted by the Sun Newspaper as saying:



***'It was a windless day. For that particular tree to fall...  
at that particular time must have been fate.'***



# OUR HIDDEN MEMORIALS

**MEMORIAL TO  
DAMIAN MCKENZIE  
AT STEAVENSON  
FALLS, MARYSVILLE**

ON THE 4TH OF SEPTEMBER 1974 TEN YEAR OLD  
**DAMIAN MCKENZIE**  
FROM COBDEN WENT MISSING WHILE ON AN EXCURSION  
TO STEAVENSON FALLS AND WAS NEVER FOUND.  
FAMILY AND FRIENDS DEDICATE THIS PLAQUE IN HIS MEMORY.



Ten year old Damian McKenzie went missing while on an excursion to the Steavenson Falls area at Marysville Wednesday 4 September 1974 around 11.30 am. He had been on a five day camping trip with 40 Young Australian League members and was climbing the track to the top of Steavenson Falls when he disappeared. He was last seen heading into the bush. A search involving over 120 Police Search and Rescue Squad members and Civil Defence Volunteers was conducted and eventually abandoned the following Monday with no result. Thick bush and wet conditions had hampered the search over the weekend.

***On the 4th of September 1974 ten year old  
DAMIAN MCKENZIE”  
from Cobden went missing while on an excursion  
to Steavenson Falls and was never found.  
Family and friends dedicate this plaque in his memory.***

In April 2018 the case was re-opened by Police as a cold-case investigation.



# STEAVENSON FALLS

MARYSVILLE - 4 JUNE 2021 - PUBLISHED ESPLASH264

MANAGED BY: **PARKS VICTORIA**  
MINISTERS: LILIANA (LILY) D'AMBROSIO  
MELLISA HOME



## A winters day trek to Steavenson Falls

Being out of lockdown at the time of this walk, and wanting to take advantage of rainfall entering the upper falls catchment during the previous week, I was off to the magnificent Steavenson Falls at Marysville.



Steavenson Falls Scenic Reserve Parking Permit Dispenser			
Motorcycle	Car <i>up to 9 seats</i>	Small Bus <i>10 to 29 seats</i>	Large Bus <i>30 or more seats</i>
\$1.00	\$3.00	\$7.00	\$14.00

DISPLAY PERMIT ON DASHBOARD WITH DATE VISIBLE FROM OUTSIDE VEHICLE  
TICKET VALID TO PURCHASER ONLY, FOR THE DAY OF PURCHASE

In case of fault: Ph. 5957 7111

Fees used entirely for the care of the reserve and facilities. Thank you from the Committee of Management

FEE PAID: \$3.00  
UNTIL: 11:57 PM

Insert Coins Here



Steavenson Falls Reserve  
ABN: 47 834 076 962  
Meter No: SFSR1

TICKET VALID FOR DATE  
OF PURCHASE ONLY.  
VALID FOR PURCHASER ONLY.

**EXPIRES**  
**11:57PM**

FR 4 Jun 2021  
FEE PAID: \$3.00 INC GST  
TAX INVOICE: 60419  
PURCHASED: 11:44AM 04/06/2021  
COIN PAYMENT

- 1 Insert coins
- 2 Press **TICKET** button for ticket  
OR  
Press **CANCEL** for coin refund

**NO CHANGE GIVEN**





Carpark view of facilities



Courtesy State Library Victoria



Steavenson Falls (also incorrectly spelt 'Stevenson's Falls' in early newspapers) is a large waterfall located just upstream from Marysville on the Steavenson River in Central Victoria.

The township of Marysville was already an active rural community by 1863 and has previously been referred to in newspapers as Steavenson's Crossing (1864) and Maryville (1865). It was first surveyed as a township in 1864 by Assistant Government Surveyor George McDonald, and the first Post Office was established at 'Maryville' on 1 March 1865 under the charge of Postmaster Robert Mayne.

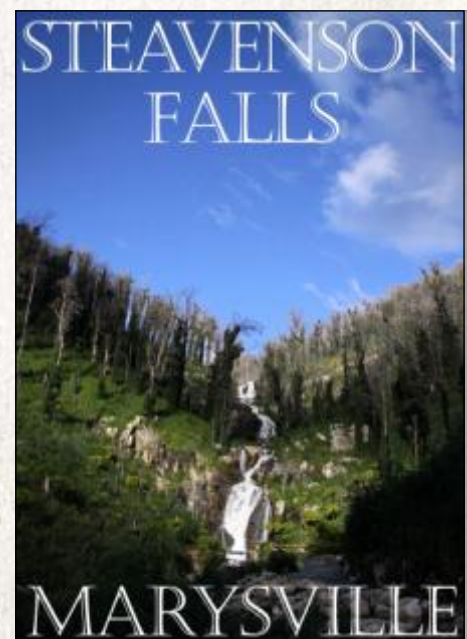
Steavenson Falls was first named McDonald Falls after Surveyor George McDonald, the first European to closely examine the Falls. He visited the Falls in late September 1864, then wrote a letter describing the Falls, which was published in the Melbourne *Herald* on Friday 7 October 1864, and in other publications soon after.

In 1866 the Falls were opened up to the public when Government Minister Gavin Duffy directed a track be cleared to the Falls. It eventually became a significant attraction for visitors from Melbourne, and its appeal increased further as road conditions improved, the motor vehicle replaced the horse and cart and travel time between Melbourne and Marysville decreased.

The introduction of guesthouses along the route between Narbethong (then called Nar-Be-Thing) and Marysville made visiting Marysville and the Falls even easier. Visitors could stay in the area in modern guesthouses with excellent facilities. While there they could enjoy many other natural features found in and around Marysville and District.

Download our factsheet (right) for much more.

*Click to download the  
Artworkz Steavenson Falls factsheet*







Path to the Falls      (Inset) Stairway down to the river and a chair





Viewing platform

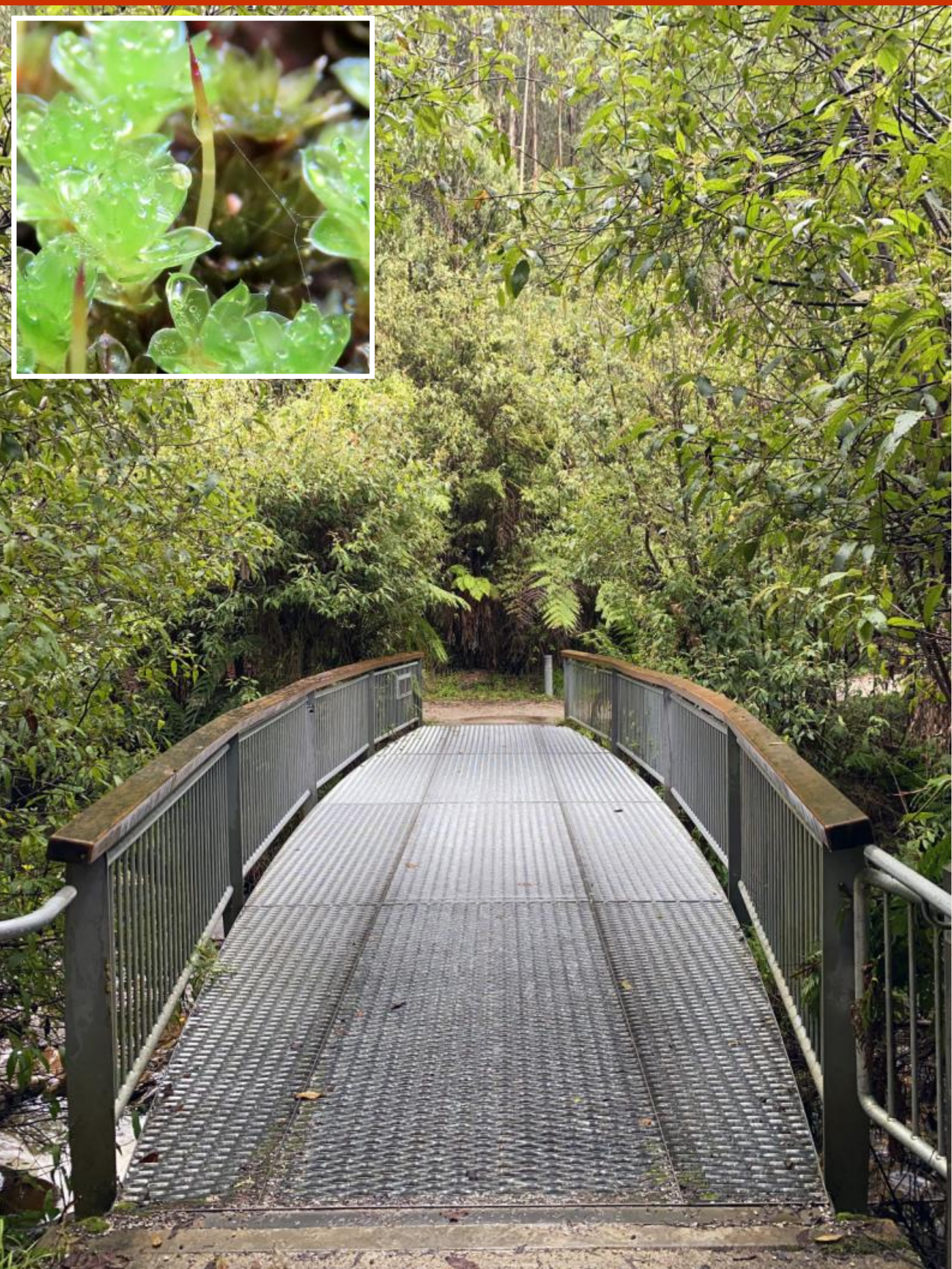
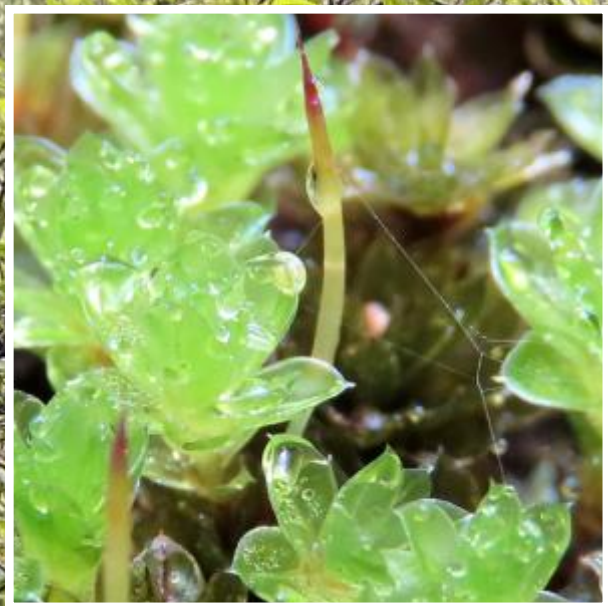


- STEAVENSON FALLS -



The Falls and an unknown micro plant





Bridge below the falls extending over the river

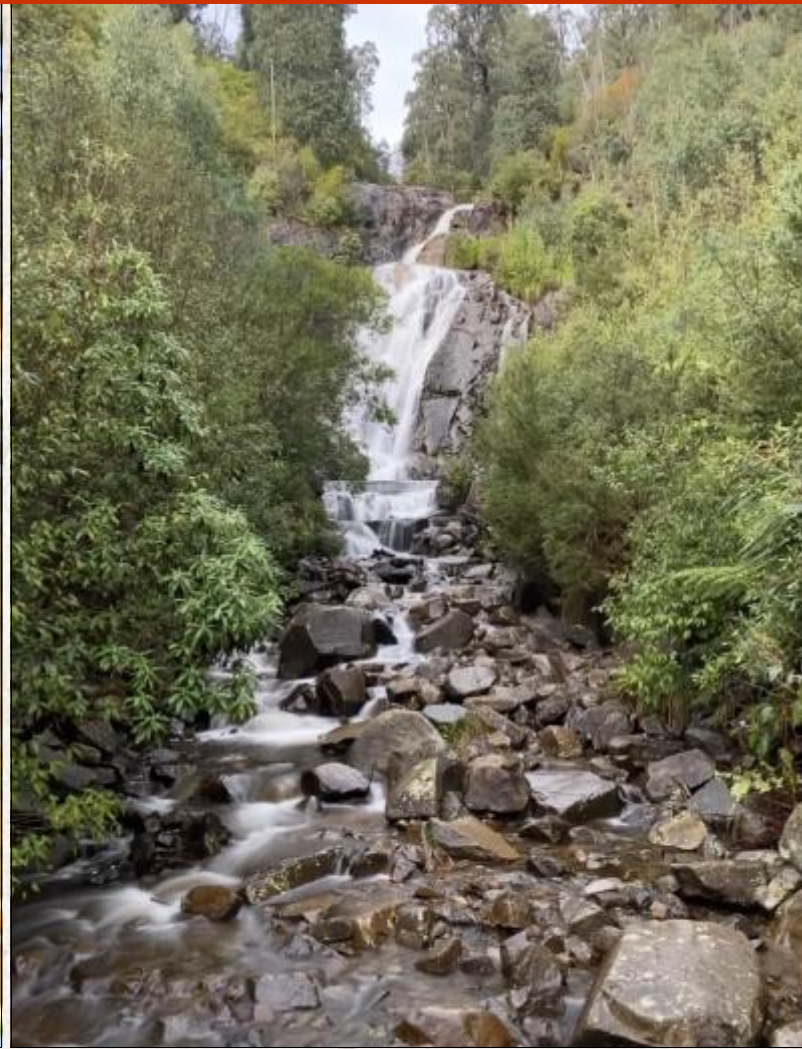




Steavenson River with a beautifully coloured hazel pomaderris leaf



- STEAVENSON FALLS -











*Artworkz*

*Serving the community*