

## **Supplementary material**

### **The 1840 Western Port journey and Aboriginal fire history in the grassy ecosystems of lowland, mesic south-eastern Australia**

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**Supplementary Table S1. Summary of the earliest observations of Aboriginal burning at Western Port (1801-27)**

#	Date	Type	Season	Location	Source	Evidence
1	March 28, 1801	Past	00/01	Bass River region	Grant 1803	"he had seen no natives, but had discovered several marks of fires. This was the first account I had of the probability of there being natives to be met with here"
2	March 31, 1801	Past	00/01	Bass River region	Grant 1803	"some distance inland [he also] discovered marks of fires that had been made by the natives"
3	December 10, 1801	Current	01/02	Yallock Creek region	Murray 2001	"Observed the smoke arising from the fires of the natives on the North Eastern Arm"
4	December 11, 1801	Current	01/02	Yallock Creek region	Murray 2001	"Observed the smoke arising from the fires of the natives on the North Eastern Arm"
5	December 18, 1801	Current	01/02	French Island	Murray 2001	"Today we saw one fire which fancy could not have been more than 4 miles from Tortoise Point or perhaps 7 from the vessel"
6	December 17, 1801	Current	01/02	Mornington Peninsula region (eastern plains)	Murray 2001	"and this day saw one fire that could not be more than 4 or 5 miles from us inland"
7	February 2, 1802	Current	01/02	Mornington Peninsula region (eastern plains)	Murray 2001	"Native fires seen on the coast and up both arms"
8	February 3, 1802	Current	01/02	Mornington Peninsula region (eastern plains)	Murray 2001	"Native fires seen on the coast and up both arms"
9	February 4, 1802	Current	01/02	Mornington Peninsula region (eastern plains)	Murray 2001	"Native fires seen on the coast and up both arms"
10	January 2, 1802	Current	01/02	Yallock Creek region	Murray 2001	"Observed a fire a long way up the NE branch"
11	February 2, 1802	Current	01/02	Yallock Creek region	Murray 2001	"Native fires seen on the coast and up both arms"
12	February 3, 1802	Current	01/02	Yallock Creek region	Murray 2001	"Native fires seen on the coast and up both arms"
13	February 4, 1802	Current	01/02	Yallock Creek region	Murray 2001	"Native fires seen on the coast and up both arms"
14	February 7, 1802	Current	01/02	Yallock Creek region	Murray 2001	"Observed a number of fires up the NE arm"
15	January 16, 1827	Recent Past	26/27	Cardinia region	Hovell 1827	"Passed many Huts on our way, on the sides of the Creek they had only left them a few days back, the Grass all around has been burned lately"
16	February 14, 1827	Past	26/27	Yallock Creek region	Hovell 1827	"repeated burnings" amongst dense Tea-tree either side of Yallock Creek Plains
17	February 25, 1827	Current	26/27	Corinella region	Hovell 1827	"Yesterday and today the bush was set on fire to the East of the Settlement by the natives"

Notes: Some of the earliest accounts appear to be established opinion about frequent Aboriginal firing at particular open grassy plains (located near Yallock Creek and on the Mornington Peninsula i.e. Bass River, Cardinia, Corinella, Yallock Creek, French Island and eastern Mornington Peninsula), and are not direct observations of firing (Wetherall 1922; Cunningham 1827). Only 17 of the many records of fire/smoke attributed to Aborigines at Western Port were considered reasonably reliable accounts of Aboriginal firing. Consistent with the literature, presumably at least some of the balance of the records can be attributed to other forms of anthropogenic fire (signalling, food preparation, domestic, ceremonial etc. and even attempted repudiation of invaders, see Fensham 1997; Sturt quoted in Colloff 2014), plus a background level of wildfire

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