

## **Shire of Dandaragan: the district that has it all**

Dandaragan is Diversity.

A visit to this Shire is a must for everybody – whether they be old or young, ‘cool’ or old-fashioned, fishermen, ‘boaties’, gentle swimmers and paddlers, surfers, snorkellers, divers, windsurfers, bush walkers, nature lovers or sight-seers.

Dandaragan is within easy reach of Perth and can be visited in a day. However, longer stays are also recommended, as there is so much to see and do.

Dandaragan offers the visitor almost everything - ranging from fabulous farming scenery, national parks [native flora and fauna, extensive inland and ocean views], bush walks, unique Australian wildflowers, an emu farm and historical buildings, to aquatic playgrounds for pastimes such as swimming and snorkelling during the summer months, and fantastic all year-round fishing, skin-diving and windsurfing.

It has something for everyone and for people of all ages, and the good news is that there is an excellent network of roads for both conventional and 4-wheel drive vehicles.

The weather is temperate, the climate Mediterranean. The summer months – December, January and February - are hot and maximum temperatures can reach 40? Celsius. Rainfall in the district ranges from 600 mm in the coastal areas to 350 mm in the inland area in the winter months – June, July and August - when the temperatures drop considerably.

The very isolation of Australia has led to the development of a unique indigenous flora, and Dandaragan, situated in the Central Midlands Area of Western Australia, has a wonderful array of wildflowers. The best places to view them are the undeveloped areas where no clearing has been carried out for farming and other purposes. To this end a number of national parks have been set aside to encourage the preservation of these, the native animals and birds, and the natural beauty of the landscape.

The time of the year when the wildflowers are at their best is between September and October when the temperatures rise with the advent of spring but the soil is still damp from the winter rains. Please note that it is recommended if venturing into the parks on foot that visitors use insect repellent to avoid the kangaroo ticks which are prevalent.

Organised wildflower tours are also available from Perth. For details/bookings regarding these visit the West Australian Tourist Bureau at the Perth Visitors' Centre, Forrest Place, Perth or browse their web site at [www.westernaustralia.net](http://www.westernaustralia.net). Contact can also be made by phone on 1300 361 351 or by email at 'welcome@tourism.wa.gov.au'.

## Places to Visit

### Regan's Ford

Regan's Ford is a pleasant, shady picnic spot on the bank of the Moore River about 200 metres from the Brand Highway, adjacent to the Regan's Ford Bridge.

It is the site of the an old stone crossing which was constructed in 1876 for Walter Padbury, an early settler who had taken up land further north in the early 1850s. Padbury needed an all-weather crossing so that his bullock teams could carry produce from his property, 'Yathroo', south to market and return with stores and other needs. Edward Regan who lived on the nearby property, 'Happy Valley', built it with the help of a group of local Aborigines.

In spite of the success of this ford there were times when the winter flooding was such that the river was still impassable to smaller traffic, and even after it was bituminised in later years. This was finally rectified in 1959 with the construction of the modern Regan's Ford Bridge.

### Moore River:

This river was named after George Fletcher Moore, Swan River settler, explorer, foundation member of the colony's Legislative Council in 1832, and later, its Advocate-General. He visited the area in 1836 during an exploratory search for pasture, but pronounced it too far from the Swan River Colony for development at that time.

According to a legend belonging to the Yuat [Aboriginal] tribal group:

In the creation time, the earth was flat and featureless. WAKAL, the water serpent rose up from the earth and began his long journey from the north. He came down through Watheroo and Moora, carving out the bed of the river as he went. On his back he carried fish, water snakes, gilgies, turtles and all the creatures of the river. When WAKAL got to MOGUMBER he turned sharply west, gouging out deep holes which today are the deepest pools in the river, which the Nyungars call 'MUR' and the white people call the 'Moore'.<sup>1</sup>

### **Cataby:**

Cataby is a very small township on the Brand Highway about 32 kilometres north of Regan's Ford and 160 kilometres north of Perth. It was originally known as West Dandaragan. Mineral sands mining began here in 1989.

It is a convenient refreshment stop. There are two roadhouses – the Ampol Roadhouse, which is open 24 hours a day and the BP Roadhouse, two kilometres further north and adjacent to the Cataby Hotel. Both roadhouses provide a range of facilities [including food items, refreshments, fuel, etc] and picnic areas for visitors. The hotel has unit-style accommodation for up to 30 people and meals can be ordered from the roadhouse next door.

Cataby Ampol Roadhouse: [08] 9651 2024

BP Roadhouse: [08] 9651 2010

Cataby Hotel [reservations]: [08] 9651 2012

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from a story produced by the Yuat people of Moora, Western Australia

**Dandaragan Township – situated 20 kilometres east of Cataby:**

The name comes from Dandara Spring, which was so named in 1849 by another explorer, Augustus Charles Gregory. It is the regional centre of the district and the seat of the Dandaragan Shire Council. This is an excellent example of a small Western Australian country town and it has several interesting historic buildings which are worthy of a visit.

**St Anne’s Church, Moora-Caro Road, Dandaragan [south of township]:**

This charming Anglican church, constructed between 1885 and 1887, was named after May Anne Nairn, mother of Walter Padbury’s wife, Charlotte. There is also an early well-site nearby.

The church has an interesting Gothic arch for its entry and is constructed of local soap stone which came from ‘Kayanaba’, a nearby property. This stone was soft when first quarried, so the blocks could be easily sawn into shape. Hardening occurred after contact with the air.

The building was opened as a church and school in 1888 and used for social gatherings and then, after 1890, for the Dandaragan Road Board meetings. Four extra rooms were added on at the rear circa 1900 to provide suitable accommodation for the teacher. Classes were held there until 1948 when it was condemned for use as a school. A transportable building was subsequently erected and used until a permanent school was constructed in 1952.

Open to visitors.

**Dandaragan Post and Telegraph Office and Quarters, Moora-Caro Road:**

This very attractive building is also made from local stone and was designed by the famous architect George Temple Pool who was also responsible for some of Perth's prominent buildings including the Central Railway Station. The Post Office opened for business in 1896 and in 1911 the Dandaragan telephone exchange was installed there. It is no longer open to the public and can only be viewed from the road.

**Shire Office and Chambers, Moora-Caro Road, Dandaragan:**

A much more modern building in the town is the Shire Office and Chambers. The Dandaragan area was part of the Victoria Plains Road Board District from 1871 to 1890 when the Dandaragan Road Board was formed. In 1961 it became a shire under a new Local Government Act of 1961.

This building, an excellent example of the architecture of its day, was opened on 22 June 1961 by the Minister for Local Government, LA Logan.

**Old Road Board Secretary's Residence, Moora-Caro Road, Dandaragan:**

Built of corrugated iron [and now in use as a sports' storeroom at the Dandaragan Primary School], this building was the Road Board Secretary's residence in the 1920s. It was originally situated on the other side of the road and was moved to its present location by the school's P & C Association in 1959.

Access to the public is restricted.

**Wolba Cottage or Aggie's Cottage, 'Wolba Wolba', Badgingara Road,**

**Dandaragan:**

Now owned by the Shire, Aggie's Cottage is used by local historical and craft groups.

This brick, stone and iron cottage was erected around 1871 on land which was originally taken up by Thomas Jones.

The surrounding area also became an important campsite during World War II when the army carried out extensive training exercises in the district.

**Dandaragan Cemetery, Moora-Caro Road, Dandaragan [north of the township]:**

This site was laid out for burial purposes in the 1890s and is still in use. The entry gates [and brick pillars] and a number of the early graves are still visible. Many of these graves have iron railings and those headstones which are still legible, make interesting reading for the historically-minded tourist.

Open to visitors.

**Dandaragan Roman Catholic Cemetery, Dandaragan Road, Dandaragan:**

This cemetery is situated two kilometres south of the town on the west side of Dandaragan Road. It was set aside for use on 23 July 1860 but the first known burial was not until the 1890s when a group of locals erected a fence and the cemetery was officially opened. The date 26.6.1890 can be seen on one of the old posts.

The cemetery was closed after the last burial took place on 10 April 1927. Only four headstones and a few timber crosses remain. It is open to visitors.

**Bidgerabbie Estate Vineyard, Rowes Road, Dandarragan:**

This vineyard, which is run by JAV Brown and Sons, is situated 17 kilometres south-east of the Dandaragan township. This traditional wheat and wool property was taken up by Jack Brown in 1919 and the vines were planted in 1994 by his descendants.

Bidgerabbie Estate Vineyard produces a selection of white wines, Touriga [made from a Spanish-style grape] and a tawney port. Cellar sales are by appointment only. Phone [08] 9651 3027.

**Cervantes**

Cervantes is a small, picturesque fishing town located on the coast at Thirsty Point, 245 kilometres north of Perth. It boasts a thriving fishing industry, good swimming and other water sports and it is famous for its seasonal wildflowers. A display of these is located in the township at Mid-West Wildflowers. For further details contact the Tourist Information Centre on the corner of Seville and Aragon Streets.

Telephone (08) 9652 7041

The township was named after the whaling ship, *Cervantes*, which was wrecked on the coast in 1844. The first settlers were crayfishermen, who camped here in the 1960s, and the fishing facilities followed. In 1962, 505 hectares of the Nambung Reserve were allocated for the townsite, which was gazetted the following year.

**Processing Factory Site, Madrid Street, Cervantes:**

This fish processing factory originally consisted of nothing more than two shipping containers with a 'shop' erected on the northern side. Today's factory is a very different matter and a tour can be arranged. Telephone [08] 9652 7020 for an appointment.

**First Jetty, Cervantes:**

This is a timber jetty constructed in 1962 and is situated between two newer ones. The dog-leg is a more recent addition.

**Remains of Army Lookout, Thirsty Point, Cervantes:**

This was constructed as a military lookout point during World War II in case of a Japanese invasion. All that remains today is some rusting iron and timber. Stunning views from the area.

**Lake Thetis and Stomatolites, Cervantes:**

These are a fascinating natural feature. Situated along a good road 12 kilometres to the south-east of the township at Hangover Bay, it is one of only four known sites where stromatolites can be found in Western Australia. The stromatolites are an important natural feature which 'grow' around the lake's perimeter. These are the oldest known living organisms on Earth and fossils found in these examples indicate dates of up to 3,000 million years ago.

The lake itself was named after the sailing ship, *Thetis*, in which Josua Gregory undertook a coastal survey between 1847 and 1848. The vessel was built at the Swan

River and, despite being only 14 tons, also carried substantial cargoes between Perth and Singapore in the 1840s.

### **Nambung National Park and the Pinnacles, Pinnacles Drive, Cervantes:**

The Nambung National Park, which includes the Pinnacles, is the region's major natural attraction. The park is situated 17 kilometres south-east of Cervantes and 250 kilometres north of Perth and covers an area of 17,487 hectares. It has an extensive list of resident bird life and native fauna. Wildflowers in spring. Over 190,000 people visit the area annually.

A visit to the **Pinnacles** is a must. Here are statuesque limestone pillars up to three metres high, rising out of the sand like ancient ruins. These most unusual wind-carved edifices were formed in the sand 25,000 to 30,000 years ago after the sea receded and deposits of sea shells remained behind. Over time the elements removed the surrounding sand, leaving the pillars isolated and open to wind degradation.

Access to the National Park and to the Pinnacles for conventional-drive vehicles is by road south from Cervantes. The tracks leading north from Lancelin contain patches of deep sand in some sections and are therefore recommended for 4-wheel drive vehicles only. Access to the Pinnacles area itself is by a 100 metre walking trail from the car park. A scenic drive is also available for light vehicles but they must remain on the marked track.

The Little Painted Desert and an unusual white dune area can also be viewed from the Pinnacles Lookout. These are a pleasurable, entertaining walk of four to five

kilometres for the more adventurous but if planning an extended walk of this kind, please advise the ranger. Hats, bottled water and sturdy footwear are essential.

No camping is allowed in the park but barbecue facilities, toilets, etc. are available.

**Please note:** there is no available drinking water. For more information contact the Jurien office of CALM on [08] 9652 1911 or the Ranger Station in Cervantes on [08] 9545 7043.

Organised tours are available from Cervantes and from Perth. For information on locally organised tours telephone the Shell Service Station at Cervantes on [08] 9652 7041. For tours originating in Perth contact the West Australian Tourist Bureau on 1300 361 351 or by email at 'welcome@tourism.wa.gov.au'.

### **Badgingarra District:**

Badgingarra is an Aboriginal word. 'Badgin' means 'manna gum' and 'garra' means 'water'.

### **Old Badgingarra Townsite, Moora-Badgingarra Road, Badgingarra:**

Look for the remains of some tennis courts which were constructed by residents in the late 1950s. Their surface, which was made from crushed anthills, is still visible as are some of the rough cut timber posts that formed part of the surrounding fence. These, some foundations [Burnetts' Store], and a few introduced trees are all that remain of the original Badgingarra townsite which was established in 1955. In 1969 the town was moved to its present position, six kilometres east of the Brand Highway.

**Phoebe's Reserve, Moora-Badgingarra Road:**

This reserve is situated 500 metres north of the road between the original Badgingarra township and the new. It is the site of another World War II army training camp and there is still some evidence of the trenches which were dug by its military inhabitants. It is believed they also constructed a dam in the nearby creek.

Accessible to visitors

**Badgingarra Township:**

The current township is situated just east of the Brand Highway, 205 kilometres north of Perth. Refreshments are available at both the roadhouse and the Badgingarra Tavern.

**Badgingarra National Park, Brand Highway, Badgingarra:**

This park consists of a large area of land - 13,121 hectares - which has been set aside for the preservation of many of the species of wildflowers including black kangaroo paws, which are found in this vicinity. It is also home to many reptiles, emus, western grey kangaroos and a variety of bird-life including bustards and wedge tail eagles.

A stimulating two kilometre circular walking trail has been established, commencing at a point on the west side of the Brand Highway close to the Badgingarra Roadhouse. The walk is over rugged terrain and there is a steep hill with a lookout so a reasonable level of health is required. The walk takes about 1½ hours and a CALM information booklet is available.

It is recommended that visitors intending to do the walk leave their cars in the area provided at the roadhouse. Refreshments are also available at the roadhouse and the tavern but camping is not allowed.

For more information call the Cervantes Ranger Station on [08] 9652 7043.

**Waddi Farm Wildflower and Emu Farm, Koonah Road, Badgingarra:**

This farm is located just off the Brand Highway on Koonah Road. Visitors can observe the resident flock of emus and an enchanting children's zoo. The farm and wildflower warehouse are open daily from 9 to 5 pm and a fee is charged for entry. Emu leather products and wildflower souvenirs are available for purchase.

Rental accommodation is available for overnight stays as well as caravan sites and a restaurant. For further information contact the farm on (08) 9652 9071.

**Badgingarra Research Station, Winjardie Road, Badgingarra:**

This was established in 1959 on land taken up first in November 1953 by Herbert Sudholt. It was set up to carry out research into farming the surrounding sand plain country and to assist local farmers with development. Access to visitors restricted.

**Lang Lookout, Dinner Hill, Watheroo West Road, Badgingarra:**

This elevated site has extensive long distance vistas of the surrounding countryside. The viewing area is marked out and a large rock commemorates local farmer George Elliot Lang, who was responsible for the introduction of modern-day farming techniques in the area.

Lang was also deeply committed to the preservation of the local wildflowers and frequently joined the West Australian Government Railways [WAGR] seasonal bus tours, sharing his knowledge of these and the local area. His own garden, planted with enchanting examples of the different specimens, was also a frequent stop for these tours.

This area is open to all visitors and recommended for viewing the beautiful Badgingarra countryside with its red earth and green rolling pastures.

#### **Old Cattle Yards, near Hill River, Cantabelling Road, Badgingarra:**

Just a few timber posts remain of these yards which were built by Alfred Burnett in 1946 for the Dandaragan Road Board. Used by drovers taking cattle through from stations in this area to the railway at Moora. This site was chosen because of the availability of water in a nearby soak.

Accessible to visitors but 4-wheel drive only.

#### **Jurien District:**

##### **Jurien:**

Situated 266 kilometres north of Perth, it is the largest of Dandaragan's coastal settlements. The bay was named in 1801 by French naval explorer Nicholas Baudin in honour of Charles Jurien, an administrator in the French Navy.

Boatsheds and fisherman's shacks were erected on the beach here when the rock lobster export market began to develop in the 1950s. Holiday-makers, particularly boat owners, were then attracted by the jetties, boat ramps, fuel etc. and began building accommodation for themselves. The first beach house is believed to have been constructed here in 1951.

Jurien Bay is a wonderful water playground. Ideal for short visits or longer, more relaxing summer holidays. The bay is protected by the islands and reefs which lie just a few kilometres from the shoreline, thus providing sheltered water for a multitude of recreational aquatic activities. There is safe swimming in the tranquil area created within the inland harbour, or more excitement in the surf at the other beaches in the bay. All have pristine white sands and enticing clear waters. Ideal for a cool and relaxing swim during the hot summer months.

It is also an excellent area for windsurfing and skin diving, and for recreational fishing and crabbing. The fishing is good everywhere - from the beaches, the two old factory jetties [which are now open to the public], the limestone groynes or from private boats. Facilities are provided for the boating public in the form of ramps, jetty and fuelling facilities. Pens are also available for hire and arrangements regarding the use of these can be made with the Port Officer.

The bay also provides a safe haven for the large number of rock lobster [crayfishing] boats which are based there in the fishing season. Catches are processed at the Fremantle Fisherman's Co-op in Jurien which is open to visitors, but only by appointment. Growth in the crayfishing industry saw the establishment of this

permanent factory and processing plant and the construction of a jetty in the 1960s. Further advancement occurred in 1988 with the opening of the Jurien Marina. This new marina, which cost \$8 million to build, provided the professional fishing community with 72 new commercial pens.

Rock lobsters are now highly sought after for dinner tables around the world – and particularly in countries such as Japan and the USA where very high prices are charged for such delicacies. The industry earns the region – and Western Australia – millions of dollars in export revenue each year.

#### **Walter Padbury's Jetty:**

This was built by Walter Padbury in 1885 to load stock, wool and kangaroo hides for shipment to Fremantle and overseas. It was subsequently destroyed by fire and the remains covered by sand. It was rediscovered in the 1970s and its location marked by a large rock and a plaque.

#### **Wreck Site:**

There are many known wreck sites in the reef-infested waters along Dandaragan's coastline. The remains of one which can still be seen in Jurien Bay is the *SS Lubra*. This steamship hit a reef south of Dongara on 3 January 1898. She was subsequently patched up and floated off, but the repairs were not successful in the long run. She eventually sank about three kilometres off Island Point in Jurien Bay and her boiler can still be seen sticking up out of the water in the area between Osprey Island and Favourite Island.

**Cacker Ally, Bluewater Drive, Jurien:**

This was the site of a group of fishermen's shacks in the 1960s. It was so named because of the high numbers of 'cackers' – local slang for the illegal, undersized crayfish - which were regularly landed here.

**Jurien Cemetery and Tuart Trees, Memorial Drive, Jurien:**

These splendid trees are believed to be the most northerly stand of tuarts in WA. The site is also located adjacent to the old North-South Stock Route – the line used for driving stock [sheep, horses, cattle and even camels] between Champion Bay [Geraldton] and the Swan River Colony, as the original settlement at Perth was first known.

**North-South Stock Route**

This was originally gazetted in 1862 and such were the numbers of stock being moved along it by the 1890s that it was then gazetted as a half-mile wide swathe through the bush and a number of reserves were set aside as overnight stopping areas. These were usually places where water was plentiful but wells were sunk where necessary. Its use declined considerably with the opening of the Midland Railway as far as Moora in 1893.

Overnight stopping and watering places in the Dandaragan Shire include the Drivers' Cave National Park, The Diamond of the Desert and Three Mile Swamp.

**Drovers' Cave National Park, Jurien Bay Road, Jurien:**

Located approximately six kilometres east of Jurien, this national park is 2,681 hectares in area. It provides good examples of banksia and bottle bush but bush walks should be restricted to fire-breaks only as the under story is very thick.

This was an overnight stopping place along the stock route which provided good fresh water and a sheltered camping spot for the drovers. The cave itself, which is administered by CALM, is kept locked and access is limited. The same applies to the numerous other caves in the area. The reasons for this are to ensure public safety and to prevent further acts of vandalism.

**The Diamond of the Desert, off Cockleshell Gully Road:**

Another stopping place on the northern stock route, again because of the presence of fresh water. Although the site is accessible, sand now covers the spring, which was named after a place in one of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

**Three Mile Swamp:**

This was another overnight stop on the stock route. It was situated adjacent to a portion of the Shire's southern border and Mimegarra Road, just north of Nine Mile Swamp where the stock route split into summer and winter tracks.

**Remains of Radar Installation, North Head, Jurien:**

These interesting concrete remains consist of the original foundations, two relatively intact shelters [which housed the electric motors], and an underground tank. The station was set up in the early 1940s by the Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] to

detect the presence of any Japanese invaders along this very vulnerable strip of coastline.

**RM Bartle Memorial, North Head:**

A granite cairn and a plaque located at North Head, 14 kilometres north of Jurien. It was erected in memory of Robert Murray Bartle who was killed by a shark while skin-diving in the area. Accessible to 4-wheel drive vehicles only.

**Lesueur National Park, Cockleshell Gully Road, Jurien:**

This park, which was proclaimed in 1992, is 23 kilometres north-east of Jurien but access is limited. It has magnificent coastal and inland views from a number of high points including Mt Lesueur, Cockleshell Gully and Mt Peron, which was named in honour of Francois Peron, a French zoologist who accompanied Charles Baudin's voyage of discovery in 1801.

The park is one of the most important areas of wildflower conservation in the state and has an abundance of these [in season] and of wildlife. Mount Lesueur, the large flat-topped hill which dominates the area, was named after French artist Charles Lesueur who also took part in Baudin's expedition. This is highest point in the Gairdner Range and the lookout has magnificent views of the coastline reaching as far north as Green Head. Because of its height it has been used as a navigational aid since European settlement began. It was also used as a marker for the northern border of the Dandaragan Road Board when it was formed in 1890.

While a 4-wheel drive is required for this area, other recommended drives where natural bushland and wildflowers can be viewed from conventional drive vehicles, and at a leisurely pace, are along the Munbinea, Jurien East, Cantabilling, and Blackarrow Roads.

### **Sandy Point:**

Enjoyable and intriguing beach front camping site. Accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicles only. Superb swimming, snorkelling, and beach fishing. Exhilarating beach walks or for the less energetic, an excellent spot for just basking in the sun.

This was probably the earliest summer camping spot for farming families from Dandaragan and places further afield in the Moora, Victoria Plains and Gingin Shires. They did not purchase the land, they just squatted on it. Later on, around the 1920s, they erected makeshift shacks and other accommodation.

Amongst the other areas where similar squatters' holiday shacks can be found are Sandland Island, Wedge Island and Green Island. These can also only be accessed by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

**Go for it.** Visit **Dandaragan** on your next holiday – be it just a day trip to the Pinnacles and the wildflowers [it is within easy reach of Perth], or a weekend - or better still, make it a longer stay. You will not be disappointed!

Rough map of north-south stock route through the Shire of Dandaragan

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Wedge Island

Cervantes

Jurien

Regans Ford

Moore River

Nambung River

Nine Mile Swamp

Cockleshell Gully

Diamond of the Desert

Three Mile Swamp

Drovers Cave

Dandaragan

Hill River

Mt Peron

Mt Lesueur

Dinner Hill

Sandy Point

Green Island

Hangover Bay

Coomodod Swamp

Mimegarra Swamp