

KOMBUMERRI PEOPLE—THE COOMERA RIVER

The local Aboriginal people, the Kombumerri, used the Coomera River for thousands of years. It was also used by the early settlers. European settlers were quick to recognise the farming potential of the land near the river. The scrub was soon cleared and crops such as sugar can and arrowroot were planted. Dairy farming also became one of the major activities along the Coomera River.

Easy to navigate rivers were used like highways by the native peoples. They used bark canoes to travel around. Large mangrove forests, swamps and deep water crossings made travel by land difficult. The Kombumerri people would leave canoes in places for later use by either themselves, other tribal members and family friends. The Aboriginals hunted for fish, crustacean and shellfish in the Coomera River and crabs in the mangroves along the banks. Middens have been found along the Coomera River banks. Middens are mounds of shellfish, fish and animal bone, and even misplaced stone artefacts.

Wildlife such as wallabies, bandicoots, possums, carpet snakes, goannas and birds and were hunted by the local Aboriginals. Old campsites have revealed bones that have been identified as most of these. These sites were located close to the river with easy access to fresh water. The scrub contained a wide range of flora that provided the Aboriginals with food (fruits, nuts, roots and tubers), as well as material for camp utensils (dilly bags, coolamons, digging sticks) and weapons such as spears, nullas and boomerangs. Growing close to the freshwater streams were a range of trees, including shrubs and vines that could be used as fish poisons. The flowering of some plant species was helpful to the Kombumerri people and signalled the best time to hunt certain animals, including freshwater tortoises, eels and fish.

Evidence of stone tool-making activity has also been located at old campsites. The material for stone implements was sourced from Wongawallan. The Aboriginals would canoe their way up the Coomera River to a special point and then take a short walk to the stone quarries. Stone artefacts made from these quarries include knives, scrapers and axes. To make ground-edged axes, the Kombumerri would locate suitably shaped, hand-sized stone such as basalt from the shallower parts of the river. They would then sharpen the stone to its desired shape on suitable grindstone material down near the stream.

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| Kombumerri | helpful | spears | settlers | hunted | River | possums |
| canoes | sugar cane | Water | stone | arrowroot | boomerangs | middens |