

At Monsalvat (28 April 2012 4:50 pm), Bill Gammage was asked :

"In regard to Extreme Bushfire in this area of Eltham, how would you rate our risk now, compared with before white settlement?"

Note:

On Sunday 29th April 2012 Malseed and Gammage discussed the implications of "The Biggest Estate on Earth" for the Eltham Gateway, and referred to a preliminary draft of "Bushfire Death Trap - The Eltham Gateway".

Bill Gammage agreed to answer the above question again, this in writing (see below).

This area is a shambles in that regard. It is very far from the "parks" & (the associations of grass, woodland and forest) that early Europeans so much admired. Instead this area is what people would have called "dirty" or "wild" country in 1788 - unbroken fire channels of grass, mid-storey scrub and very dense tree canopy. It is as though you are trying to set ~~a~~ fires rather than prevent them. Aboriginal people protected dense forest of course - it's a habitat - but they located in carefully, ringed it or broke it up with grass, isolated scrub in pockets, left wildlife corridors in the least fire sensitive areas. Had they left the bush here as it is now, they could not possibly have survived <sup>a fire like</sup> Black Saturday. ~~But they~~ - they could not have escaped. But here they were in 1788, so obviously they prevented such fires, by careful vegetation management.