

3 / 08 /2009



## Blandowski

There's nothing fishy about William Blandowski's expedition which documented new species of fish, Aussie Rules and sparked a scandal in Melbourne after the uncomplimentary naming, by Blandowski, of several fish species after prominent members of the Council of the Philosophical Institute, now the Royal Society of Victoria.

William Blandowski was the first Victorian government zoologist/curator of the National Museum of Victoria. In 1857, the renowned naturalist made camp at Chaffey Landing in Merbein for eight months. Aided by his assistant, Gerald Krefft and the Nyeri Nyeri people who identified the area as Mondellimin, he collected and compiled a list of over 17,000 birds, mammals and fish.

*"Brosmius bleasdalii"*, named after Reverend Mr Bleasdale, was described as a 'slimy, slippery fish that lives in the mud'.

*"Cerniia eadescii"*, 'honouring' Dr Eades, was described as 'a fish easily recognised by its low forehead, big belly and sharp spine.'

Blandowski documented that in 1857, a group of six aboriginal children, were playing on the Merbein river bank, what is today believed to be one of the first recorded displays of Aussie Rules Football. There were three children at each end and they kicked and caught a ball made from typha, or bullrush roots. Blandowski wrote '...the ball is kicked up into the air with the foot'. This was a year earlier than the official invention of Aussie Rules.

Max Whiting, Merbein Centenary Committee member and President of the Merbein District Historical Society, says "Thanks to Museum Victoria, an exhibition of the Blandowski expedition to the Murray River will be on display during the Merbein Centenary celebrations. We also thank the generous co-operation of Lynnette Rattray of Hill Corner Gardens and the Mildura Arts Centre for making this possible."

Merbein Centenary Committee member Rebecca Wells says "We're so lucky to have such an exhibition as a part of the celebrations. Blandowski's time in the area was very significant and it's great that we're able to recognise this."

Merbein Centenary Committee member Max Whiting says “Merbein Centenary celebrations will be taking place from 14 to 23 August 2009. For further information on exhibition opening times and other centenary events, please visit [www.merbeincentenary.com.au](http://www.merbeincentenary.com.au)

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