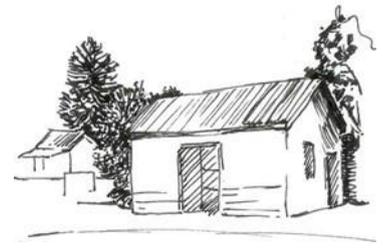


Bundanoon History Group

Monthly Newsletter



April 2019

From the President

Hello everyone,

Here's a brief update on some of our background activities this past month.

Heritage Signs: We have finally finished our DA application to Council to install interpretative signs around the village. It was a mammoth task creating two reports to seek Council's approval to install signs funded by Council on their land. We now sit back and wait, hopefully not too long and for Council's approval before we get the signs manufactured and installed.

Archive Team: As always the team has been busy. Some of the team recently met the Robinson family, descendants of Gus Nicholas at the Pill Factory. They shared stories and we were able to add a number of new photos of the Nicholas family to our archives.

Carol, Beryl and Helen, at the request of Council have also been researching the history of Rochester Park house. This is to assist Council in the assessment of a local Heritage classification for the property, whilst the remaining 7 acres is the subject of a D.A. for building more houses.

Best wishes,

David david.brennen@yahoo.com t:0432 608 474

Mothers Day Raffle Sun 12 May

...update on our major fund raiser

A great result so far. Proceeds have tipped \$1000 and there will be two more opportunities to return tickets - or buy more! - at the table outside the newsagency, on 5 and 12 May. The raffle will be drawn at noon on 12 May.

Eucalyptus Oil (Pt 1)

Philip Morton

A major local industry from the 1890s

Eucalyptus oil was one of the unexpected discoveries made by colonial settlers in NSW. Within a few weeks of the First Fleet arriving in 1788, settlers discovered the wonders of the eucalyptus tree, first found growing on the shores of Port Jackson. The properties of the oil were already well known and put to use by local Aboriginal communities. The eucalypt belongs to the Myrtaceae family. The Frenchman L'Heretier named the genus Eucalyptus in 1788. Distilling plants were set up and Eucalyptus oil was amongst the first natural raw products exported from the colony. By the 1890s enterprising businessmen in the Berrima District were participants in this 'dinkum oil' industry.

A scarce species, *Eucalyptus smithii*, which renders a higher yield of oil than many other species, was identified early on in the Southern Highlands.



Found at Hill Top and through to Wingello, it is a tall tree, up to 45m in height, with a 150cm diameter. One of the earliest local mentions of the industry appeared in the *Scrutineer* on 26 August 1892: "Eucalyptus oil-making appears to be all the rage now. We have no less than three factories at Wingello, viz, Mr R Curry, Langshaw and Bond, and Mr J Simmonds, and the oil manufactured is first class. In visiting Mr Curry's establishment the other day we were informed by that gentleman that he intends sending a sample of his oil to the Chicago Exhibition. Mr Curry is exporting half a ton of oil to England next week."

President: David Brennen

Vice President: Don Gray

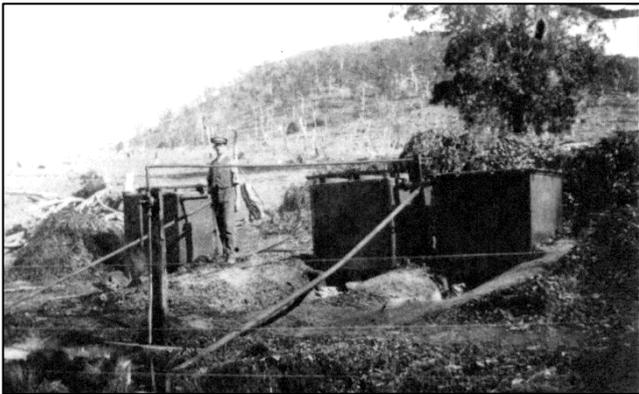
Secretary: Irene Brewster

Treasurer: Graham Morgan

Committee: Helen Clark, Ralph Clark, Dianne Gray, Kerri Goulding, Jewel Hillier, Beryl Seckington

BHG Bank details: BSB: 641 800 Account: 17104781 Ref: (your name or reference) Website: www.bundanoonhistory.org.au

In November that year the paper reported that eucalyptus cultivation had been declared a purpose for which to reserve land under the 90th section of the Crown Lands Act of 1883. As well, in a report from Wingello, the sad news was conveyed that Thomas Barrett, employed cutting leaves for the eucalyptus factory, met with a nasty accident. Instead of cutting the leaves he cut off the end of his finger. It was hoped that in a few days he would be OK again.



LIQUID GOLD: A eucalyptus oil still at Wingello, c1900. **Photo:** BDH&FHS

The *Bowral Free Press* reported on 15 March 1893 that Frank Hook lost his Eucalyptus factory in a flood at Mittagong. Over 40 pounds worth went. A fishing party afterwards found two tins of oil about three miles down the creek only slightly damaged, which were returned to the owner. At Hill Top, Daniel Chalker established a distillery in the 1890s using *Eucalyptus smithii* leaves from trees that still grow today on land he originally owned. Daniel gained a prominent mention in the first edition of *A Research on the Eucalypts and their Essential Oils*, published by the Technological Museum of NSW in 1902.

Only eucalyptus leaves and terminal branchlets were required by the distiller, so large trees were naturally a disadvantage, the material having to be collected either by lopping off the branches or by felling the trees. Lopping was dangerous and more easy collection of the leaves was obtained from the 'coppice' growth, which springs rapidly and abundantly from the short remaining stems of felled trees.

The leaves and bark were carted by wagon to the distilleries where the freshly cut material was dumped into vertical iron digesters set into the ground below wagon level for easy filling. After steam had distilled the volatile oil, the spent leaves and sticks were hoisted out by derrick and dumped on the fire. The rising column of smoke was a constant landmark.

Back in the 1880s this work was often carried out by indigenous workers and by former miners as the goldfields rush petered out. The old distilleries were somehow kept going by pieces of wire, bits of tin, lumps of clay and the resourcefulness of the true bushman whose ramshackle buildings were made of hand hewn posts and roofed with branches of nearby trees.

The business was at the mercy of international markets. The *Scrutineer* of 12 April 1893 noted: "For the sake of our local eucalyptus factories we regret the news from the London market that eucalyptus oil has dropped to 9 pence per lb and that a further decline is expected." This proved to be but a temporary setback as the industry was soon flourishing again.

To be continued next month

Coming Events

Mon 6 May 10.30am: BHG Monthly Meeting at the Memorial Hall. "History of the National Parks", Park Ranger Chris, and Ralph Clark, followed by a BBQ and drinks in the Morton National Park.

Sun 12 May – mid-day: Old Goods Shed, *Mothers Day Raffle, grand draw.*

Mon 27 May 4.30pm: *Committee Meeting* at Ralph's

Mon 3 June 10.30am: BHG Monthly Meeting at the Memorial Hall and *Australia's Biggest Morning Tea.* Everyone welcome, all proceeds go to the Cancer Council Australia who are also sending a Speaker.

Thurs 20 June: *Trip to Sydney on the Parramatta Rivercat:* Depart 8.00 am, coach to Parramatta, visit Hambledon Cottage, enjoy morning tea provided by the Parramatta Historical Society, have lunch, then join Rivercat to Sydney, and return. Cost: \$55 – incl. coach, Rivercat, morning tea and lunch. Please bring your Opal Card.