

TIMBER MILL MEMORIES

Families living in the mill houses in the early days enjoyed some advantages; work was close to home so no travelling and no rent was paid. The householders on the other hand never knew the comforts of an electricity supply. At night the soft white lights of kerosene lamps glowed at their windows and for venturing abroad after dark, the efficient hurricane lantern was often carried. The mills never worked at night, so no lighting was needed there and all necessary working power was provided by steam from the boiler.

Still, it was a good environment for children to grow up in, at a time when life proceeded at a slower tempo, with plenty of time to observe the creatures and beauty of the bush first hand – now just a happy memory for those that shared them.

Many brides began housekeeping at a mill house, many a baby was born and soon after their birth in either Alexandra or Healesville they came home to one and were lulled to sleep by the sounds of the mill saws breaking down the big logs.

It is a sad fact, but because of the one-time necessity to build sawmills in the dense forest areas, bushfires were an ever present danger. Almost all of the mills at some time suffered from partial or total destruction as a result of these bushfires.

About half of the Marysville football team members of the day worked at Andersons Mill and at midday on Saturday, one of Barton's Packard touring cars would be waiting close by, with engine running, to pick up the players, when work ceased for the week on the blowing of the mill whistle.

Some of this Premiership team's best players worked at the mill and to leave for a game in Alexandra with any of the players missing could mean that the game in the Upper Goulburn Association could be lost – a very serious matter for the football conscious town of Marysville. The mill workers were strong fit men and they helped the team to win several Premiership's during the 1930's.

In outlying areas, long distances from the little town schools meant that the Education Department had to provide a school and a teacher at several mills – Andersons, Cambarville (owned by Mr A. Cameron and Mr F.J. Barton hence the title) and at Robinson Brothers. The mill workers always ensured that the right number of children attended the schools, in order to keep them open.

Social activities also took place and the school building was always the meeting venue. The Cambarville school had a beautiful timber floor installed on which many a dance was held. The floor boards were produced at the mill and were cut from Antarctic Beech growing in the Cumberland area.

The same Antarctic Beech was also in high demand during the war years, for the manufacture of military boots and was used for the heels, had the same appearance as leather and was claimed to be of a lighter weight.

(Source: Unknown)