

Bricks and mortar of early industry

By Marg Stork

A SPECIAL part of Dandenong's history is being put under the microscope at the Heritage Hill Museum this month.

Until June 26 the museum is hosting an exhibition titled *Made by the hands of man* which explores the history of the city's brick making industry, one of Dandenong's earliest and most important industries.

In the 1840s one of Dandenong's pioneers, a Mr Lyall, used clay bricks fashioned from the soil on his property to make chimneys on his Yarraman Park home.

During the building boom of the 1880s there were at least seven clay pits operating in Dandenong and the Centennial Brickworks, located along Railway Parade from 1881 to 1911, employed up to 50 men. The bricks were used in the building of the Dandenong Town Hall in 1890.

Dandenong was particularly well known as a source of a special type of clay resistant to high temperatures and was used in the building of industrial furnaces and chimneys.

One of the world's largest deposits of fire clay was found



Past industry: The Ordish Brickworks in Stud Road were an important part of Dandenong for many years.

along Stud Road by WP Ordish, and fire brick production continued at Ordish Firebricks until the 1980s.

The Heritage Hill exhibition showcases a detailed model of the Ordish brickworks, archival photographs and heritage bricks and equipment used in brick making. It also includes a plan showing locations of early clay deposits and an explanation of the brick making process.

On Monday, June 15 from noon-3pm, the Hand Tool Preservation

Association of Australia, assisted by local collectors, will hold a demonstration day of tools and their uses, past and present.

Guided school tours of the exhibition are available on Mondays and Tuesdays but bookings are essential. Entry is free to students, and members of the public are welcome, but it is essential to book.

For school tours, call 9793 4511 or for public bookings call 9239 5134 or email gxsnit@cgd.vic.gov.au

BRICKS IMPORTANT

If it did, the pile of wood at that point would sink in and probably ruin the lot. When the "turkey" was considered to be perfectly cooked and the fire put out, the men, armed with long iron hooks, tore away the roof and sides of the "kiln" and drew out the charred logs.

If a single spark remained there would be a blaze and then the charcoal would be in danger of being ruined. A band of German settlers under **John Jacobs** also commenced charcoal burning in the 1860s.

It may surprise also to know that **Mr. George Dunbar**, "mine host" of the hotel in town, brought out a plant in 1858 to equip a brewery, and erected it in Thomas St., but it did not continue its activities for long owing to the demand not being sufficient for the labors of the staff.

Tanning was another early industry, and also the making of whiptongs. This seems to have been quite an important and profitable establishment kept by **Mr. Henderson**, who had a large trade with other States in which his whips were famous. He employed six "hands," and it was the delight of small boys, who should have been attending to other duties, to stand and watch the whips be-

ing plaited. Quarries also employed many, there being several in the district.

Brick - making also played a major part in the early industries, and the first bricks are reputed to have been made from clay dug out of a hole where the Mile Creek now flows, and were used for the chimneys of the home which **Mr. Lyall** was building at **Yarraman Park**. A brick-making plant in the very early days was on the Gippsland Rd. and worked by a man named **Northway**. Other small brick kilns were started at various places, one large one was at the intersection of **Hutton** and **Robinson Sts.**, and the hole required much filling when the street was made.

Charles Hobbs worked another in **Pultney St.** The bricks for the building of the **Wesleyan Church** in 1867 are said to have come from clay holes on the **Prospect Hill** property on the **Melbourne Rd.**, **Messrs. Nettley and Goding** having secured the contract. The bricks for the **Bridge Hotel** were made from clay dug at the rear. **Brothers Handley-Walter** and **William** — also made bricks in **CcCrae St.**, the business later being bought by **Mr. James Pickett**.

Part of the paddock on **Prospect Hill**, that nearest the township, proved

to the best for business, so the lower portion was fenced off by a brush and log fence, and for many years the **Gippsland drovers** used to rest their bullocks there overnight on their way from **Gippsland** to the **Melbourne market**.

When the **Gippsland railway line** was completed and the cattle were then transported to **Melbourne** by rail, it was time for another of the old institutions to pass away. When this happened, in 1879, there was a great crowd of people on the main street lined up to watch the last herd go through the town on its way to **Melbourne**. All along the route people in the various townships turned out to watch for the last time the great beeves waddling slowly **Melbourne-wards**, and many regrets were expressed that another of the old institutions was about to pass away.

Dandenong experienced a boom in bricks when a deposit of clay was discovered in the paddock near the site of the railway station and the **Centennial Brick Co.** was formed to run it. It carried on for about 30 years, and at one time 10 men were employed. There was a sale of the old kilns and the foundations of brick underneath many of the buildings, and the chimney stack was "dropped" before an admiring crowd.

THE FIRST BRICKS . . .

The first local bricks were made from clay dug out of a hole where now runs the Mile Creek. They were made by a **Mr. Lyall** when building the home-stead at **Yarraman Park**, in the early 50's.

The bricks were needed for the chimney. This hole was gradually extended by rains and, being 'spewey' country, there soon was washed out a succession of holes and deep cracks, until the creek was formed.

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