

Timber

Timber has been one of the most vibrant industries in the Brisbane Valley from the 1840s until today. People remember sawmills in the bush, sawyers, timber jinkers, Lars Andersen, traction engines, railway sidings overcrowded with logs, sawdust, smoke, jobs, profits and security for town economies. Sawmills have existed at Fernvale, Lowood, Esk, Toogoolawah, Moore, Linville, Harlin, Blackbutt, Monsildale, and Perseverance. A number of sawmills in the bush were relocated according to the availability of stands of timber. The earliest mills in the Brisbane Valley were Charles Smith's at Rosewood, Edwin Hine's at Dundas, and J. Jackson's at Colinton in the 1870s.

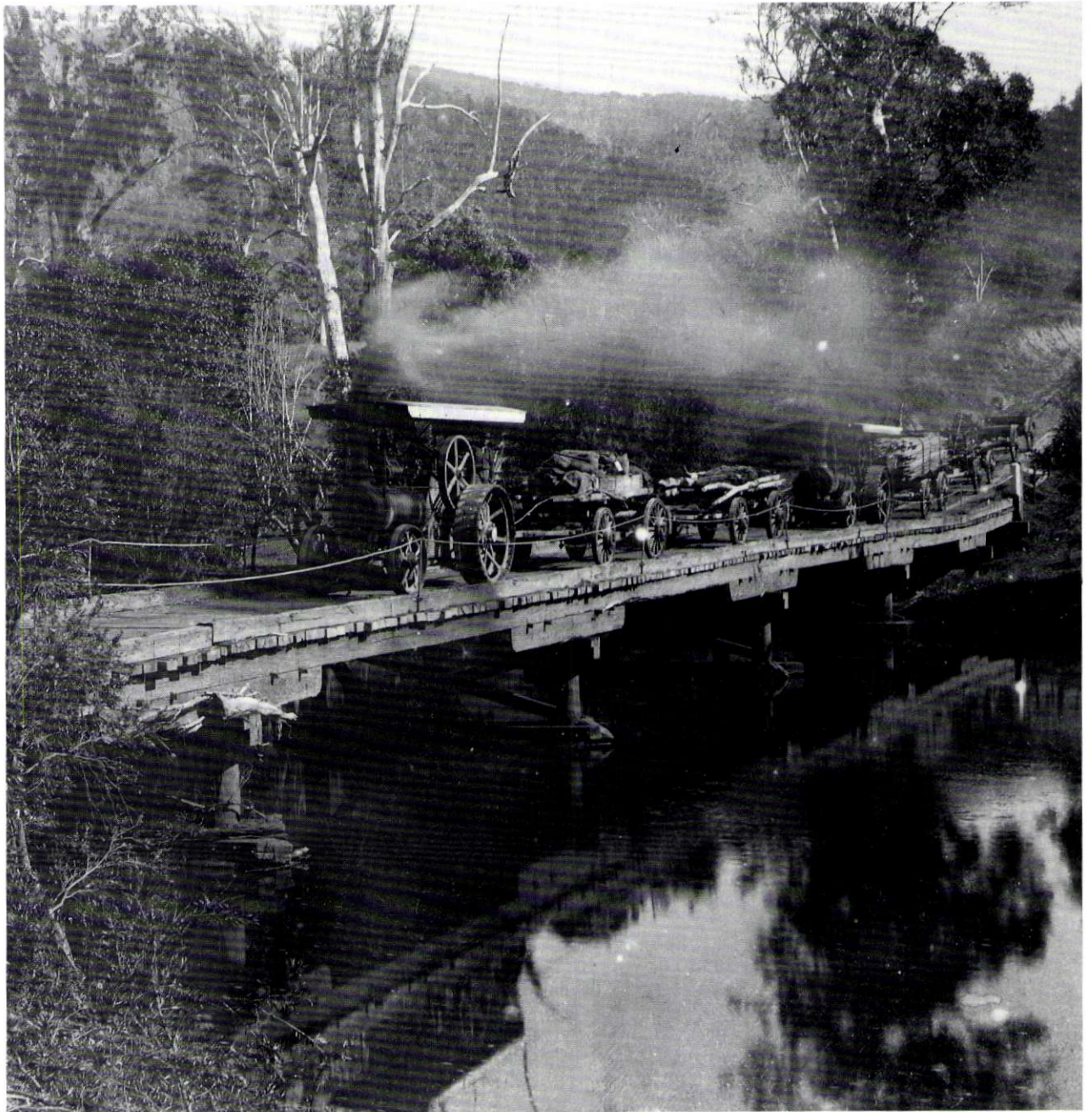
Three factors fostered the timber industry. Firstly, the railway provided rapid and cheap transport to Brisbane. Secondly, the rapidly increasing population of Brisbane and Ipswich after the 1870s required timber for housing on a continuing basis. Thirdly, the Brisbane Valley land was being rapidly cleared by selectors who needed immediate cash and sold stands of timber in order to grow crops and to build houses. Naturally the timber industry came to be controlled by the main sawmillers of Brisbane — Pattersons, Hancock and Gore, Bretts, Brown and Broad along with Blanks, Dennings, Hine, and Lars Anderson. Later there were firewood mills at Coominya to supply the Brisbane and Ipswich trade. The two factors which ultimately caused the industry to decline were the depletion of timber stands on land selections and the cut back in house building in Brisbane around World War I.

The vegetation of the Brisbane Valley has been changed by European settlement. Practically the whole area was covered by heavy forest when first seen in the 1820s except for areas of open forest of Queensland gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), Moreton Bay ash (*E. tessellaris*), gum-topped box (*E. moluccana*), and swamp box (*Tristania suaveolens*) dominating on the alluvial flats. The elevated areas carried closed vine forests which were dominated by hoop pine (*Auracaria cunninghamia*). Now only some pockets of soft scrub remain in the Marburg and Minden Ranges, featuring deciduous trees such as Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*), bottle tree (*B. perestre*) and bats'-wing coral tree (*Enythrina vespertilio*). Small patches of brigalow (*Acacia harpophyllia*)

exist along with eucalyptus forests with the best developed species being Sydney blue gum (*E. slaighna*); Blackbutt (*E. pilvianis*) occurs on the hilly country south of Cressbrook Creek and west of Buaraba. Adjacent to the vine forest grow the scrub box (*Tristania conferta*), grey gum (*E. punctata*) but they are dominated by narrow leaved ironbark (*E. crebra*). The she-oaks (*Casuarina cunninghamia*), black tea tree (*Melaleuca bracteata*), and red bottle brush (*Callistermon viminalis*) fringe the streams. The main cabinet timbers harvested from the Valley have been Crows Ash (*Flindersia*), Yellowwood (*F. Oxleyana*), Ivory wood, Brown Tulip Oak (Crows's Foot Elm), cedar (cut out by 1900) and pine.¹

The chief millable timber in demand since the first settlement has been pine. Some of the finest pine in the Valley was that on the ridge on the southern side of Somerset Dam. Timber licences under Section 3 of the 1839 Act were not available for the Bunya pine on the northwestern slopes of the Brisbane Valley. However the trees were attractive to buyers because W.M. Fraser in Brisbane was offering them for sale in 1846; but there was still no sawbench in the Moreton Bay district. Timbergetters were also rafting timber down the river near Pine Mountain in 1858 supplying Joseph Flemming's Bremer steam sawmill.

Although there were occasional inspections of timber licences, large portions of timber were cut without licences as evidenced by 10,000 super feet of timber being found in the possession of unlicensed timbergetters in 1863 at Pine Mountain. Meanwhile, in 1864, at the northern end of the Valley Thomas Williams, James Norman, Robert Jackson, James Rage, and James Sellen were licenced to cut hardwood timber in the Nanango district. R. Kendall ran the sawmill there in the 1870s. The first selectors in the Lowood area had immediate access to the river for timber from their selections. It was heavy work snigging the logs to the river bank at Goodman's Lane and then a spectacular sight rolling them into the river before chaining and dogging them for rafting downstream. Thomas Hancock and his sons already had their Rosewood Sawmills operating in the Rosewood and Walloon scrubs and held extensive selections in the heavily timbered areas surrounding Lowood. Up



Traction engines on the Gregor's Creek Road.

Mr & Mrs H. Langton

on the range there were several thriving sawmill villages northeast of Toowoomba, the three mills at Highfields alone employing seventy-six men in 1875.²

It was the cedar stands which the pastoralist sought out. In May 1874 John McConnel was disappointed at not being able to pre-empt selections at Durundur because the government intended to gazette the area as a timber reserve. Meanwhile selectors must have seen timber waggons passing down the Main North Road and emerging from the scrubs with huge loads of cedar. G.G. Smith of Esk was using Peters' waggon in

1879 but timbergetters were worried about the management of the trade. They met in Fernvale Hotel in April 1880. When the railway to opened to Lowood the timber was immediately railed with G. Nunn, James West and G. Chislett hauling to the station. In 1884 the directors of the Brisbane Tramway Company let a contract to W.R. North to supply sixteen thousand ironbark sleepers for the horsedrawn tramway being laid in the streets of the capital. The blocks were obtained from the Buaraba scrubs just to the west.³

Up until the mid-1880s, when there were no decent roads or railways on which to transport

cultivated produce, timber was the only form of immediate income. However the exploitation of timber had already become a public issue. In June 1889 the Esk Divisional Board agreed with the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce that they ought to have a policy of preservation of trees. The Royal Commission of 1879 addressed the issue of exploitation of timber resources; they found that timbergetting had been carried on in Queensland to ruinous excess, conveying a vague and erroneous idea of the vastness of the timber stands. Vigorous competition had developed amongst sawmillers, and the supply of log timber to Brisbane had decreased in quantity and quality. A duty of 2s. per hundred feet was imposed on exported cedar and the more regular gazettal of timber reserves was encouraged.

However the Commission had little effect in protecting the resources and has drawn continued criticism ever since. The Act did nothing to prevent waste and builders continued to use cedar, yellowwood, beech, and silky oak in house building. In 1882 with vast areas of land selections being cleared, Queensland was exporting four million super feet valued at £30,600 and home consumption was estimated at three times the export quantity. However in the 1880s, 57,440 acres had been set aside as Forestry Reserves in the Valley at Anduramba, Buaraba, Deongwar, Cooyar, Taromeo, and Colinton. As early as 1889, Charles H. Barton suggested that the loss of the forests would affect the productivity of the soil and the climate of the future.⁴

In the fifteen years before Gallipoli sixty-six thousand tons of timber were forwarded from Esk railway station, comprising both logs and sawn timber from Lars Andersen's and Blank's sawmills, both of whom had started milling in 1884. The timber came from the Esk district itself, as well from Kipper Creek, Cressbrook Creek, Gregor's Creek, and in the Stanley and Kilcoy directions. Carl and August Blank had been cutting timber on the Brisbane River for thirty years when, in 1900, they reported on the desirability of extending the railway towards Cressbrook Creek. Ringbarking was prevalent on all the land selections and most of the cedar had been taken out by the turn of the century. The pine was valued for making butter boxes. Timber along roads and on reserves was coveted by sawmillers, enterprising teamsters, and nearby selectors. Conflict between them often had to be resolved by the Shire Council. As well there were often claims of timber stealing and timber being left in dangerous positions on roads. As early as 1889 the Divisional Board reserved all timber on roads for its own use and was prepared to sell it and

in 1915 even the Council procured timber for its own use from the Deer Reserve.⁵

People's memories of the timber industry in its heyday cover timber felling, hauling, and milling. Each deserves elaboration in itself. All the sawmillers were entrepreneurs, in their own way controlling large sections of the Valley. Some, such as Lars Andersen, were Councillors, and this allowed them extra influence and knowledge of local developments. Some had come as immigrants and selectors to the Valley and prospered through the opportunity that timber presented. The Blank Brothers established a whole town on the western side of the railway at Esk with cottages for their workers erected all around the mill along the lines of the British and German mill owners. Lars Andersen never built workers' accommodation in the same way, although it was a family business.

Lars Andersen ran an integrated operation — controlling the timber from scrub to sawn timber. His was by far the largest sawmilling operation in the Valley. He sought out the valuable scrub lands, obtained a lease, or bought it at auction; throughout the Valley he bought and sold land for a half century. He was a developer — always there first. He had two other mills — Kipper Creek and Blackbutt, and a mill at Wengenville outside the Valley. Most importantly, his transport operations were pre-eminently efficient — with tramways at Kipper Creek, flying foxes where necessary and spectacularly at Somerset Dam, and traction engines as soon as they became available. His traction engines stimulated much jealous comment. Land owners were quick to criticize — they broke the old and flimsy timber culverts over gullies and started all the fires along roads, destroying selectors' grass. He and the Blanks were the only sawmill owners to live locally. All the others were branch offices of Brisbane companies who employed managers. This characteristic determined their reputation as employers and payers. Perhaps that is why Lars Andersen has been particularly revered in the Valley.

The lifestyle of timbergetters is similar to that of miners in respect to the loneliness, the dangerous nature of the work, the unforgiving hours, and the long arduous apprenticeship system or gradations through the workplace. Teamsters like the Bliesners are noted for their colourful vocabulary. What is often ignored is the long hours they worked and how opportunistic they were in their selection of areas to work and how they changed the landscape through their on-the-spot road construction. The roads were often clearings through the scrub made by felling the timber. In



Bullock team at Harlin.

Pat Humphries, Harlin

wet weather they were too treacherous for either bullock waggons or chain-track machines. Thus sawmillers often located their mills close to the scrub because of transport costs in time and money. They also constructed tramways with wooden rails, three by four inch sections of hardwood wedged or nailed to the sleepers. The tramway trolleys were wooden with steel axles carrying steel flanged wheels, rope operated. In some places tramways negotiated gradients as severe as one in four. Lorries were a great advantage after the first World War, reducing transport time from four days to four hours where the terrain was flat enough for them and the roads were solid enough.

Often selectors themselves worked as teamsters to obtain capital to purchase or develop land. They graduated to traction engines and motor lorries if they had capital and rapidly adapted to new conditions such as the advancing railway. Their knowledge of the local selection patterns and the economic fortunes of farmers enabled them to buy good land when farmers were keen to sell and several later became auctioneers and dealers.

Timberjinker drivers rarely saw their children during the week, starting out for work at 3am so as to arrive at the scrub by daybreak, and returning home at around 8pm. They worked under risky conditions within the measure of safety they knew

in their job; for example, out at Somerset Dam Harry Langton knew how to come down the hill into the town with a loaded jinker passing comfortably through the white gate posts. Out at Mount Byron he knew just where to stop to tighten the twitches and then could control the risks of skidding down the last two hundred yards.⁶

Because of the serious damage to roads, the Divisional Board was forced to tax teamsters. The Wheel Tax, introduced at Christmas 1887, created continuing controversy. Proposed by Board Members McConnel and Lord, the wheel tax By Law imposed charges according to size and type of wheel. Timber could only be hauled by wheeled conveyances, with a licence number and owner's name indicated on the side, and could not be stored on the roads. Wide wheels were not taxed at all, in response to the representations of timbergetters Bolden, Langton, Peters, Hine, and Mackay to the Board on 9 December 1887. However, the wheel tax did provide revenue for road maintenance.⁷

There were two sawmills in Esk when the railway was opened in 1886 — Blank's and Lars Andersen's. Lars Andersen was more entrepreneurial in style than the Blanks. Each deserves special attention. There had also been an earlier attempt in 1885 at establishing a sawmill at Esk (then known as Gallanani). That was Porter's

abortive efforts on Allotments 1 and 2 of Section 4 in the town of Gallanani (the government name for the town of Esk). He had purchased those blocks at an auction on 22 April 1884, believed then to be adjacent to the proposed railway station. However the site of the station had not been finalized. Porter ordered a £685 sawmill plant in February 1885 but in October found that the railway station was not to be erected near his allotments and abandoned the project, selling the land at a reduced price. Porter complained and a Select Committee of which James Foote was Chairman was appointed to investigate. C.L. Depress, surveyor, gave evidence on behalf of the Railway Department that it had decided in January 1884 where the railway station was to be sited but that the Lands Department did not ascertain that information when drawing its map. Porter had been misled into buying land almost a mile from the railway station over a hill; his claim for £273 compensation was, however, rejected.⁸

The Blank Brothers (Carl and August) commenced sawmilling in partnership with James Brown at Esk in 1884. Brown disposed of his interest in two years. The Blank's father, Frederick (aged 51 years) and all the family, Louise (47), Frederick (18), Wilhelm (16), Justine (13), Christian (11), Carl (7), August (4) and Herman (1) had immigrated to Queensland on the *Beausite*, arriving at Brisbane on 5 September 1863, as some of the earliest Prussian immigrants. Frederick Snr was naturalized on 13 September 1865 and worked on Mount Brisbane. He died on 17 October 1866 and was buried at Mount Stanley. His wife, Louise, and sons, Wilhelm, Carl and Christian, selected 680 acres of land in the Northbrook area (Portions 5, 54, 58 and 59) in 1873 and 1,430 acres of land in the Monsildale area in 1876, 1888 and 1891, and 152 acres in the Esk Parish (Por.168) in 1890. They gravitated to Redbank Creek in the mid 1880s with sufficient capital for an industrial enterprise.

The Blank and Brown sawmill was the first one in Esk. Carl was bookkeeper and August ran the mill, situated between the railway yards and Redbank Creek on the western side of the line. Christy Blank brought pine supplies in from Coal Creek (then known as Wheeler's Crossing). John Gorrie was benchman. The Blanks built a group of houses for their workmen near the sawmill. That line of timber houses, known as Blankstown and housing thirty people, was a well-known feature of the town and a hive of activity near Shambrook's cordial factory.

On 8 December 1903 Frederick James Martin came from Boonah, where he had worked in a sawmill, to Esk to lease Blank's mill. His first order

came from Lahey Brothers on 12 December 1903 for twelve thousand super feet of three quarter inch timber at 10s. 6d. per one hundred super feet. When Martin and his sons moved to Kipper Creek to establish a sawmill there in 1906, Blank's mill closed.⁹

Martins established a sawmill on Kipper Creek, west of Esk, in August 1906, operated it until March 1920, and then sold it to Pattersons. Martin's foreman at Kipper Creek was Robert Fraser. Dick Teske also worked at the mill and his children were all distinctively dressed in bowler hats to go to school. Martins also established a grocery shop at the mill for use of the mill families who lived close by. Frederick Martin sold out in 1920 when Lars Andersen was expanding his tramways in the area. Martin foresaw the end of boom conditions in the timber industry and saw an opportunity in buying Mrs E. Drake's newsagency in Esk.¹⁰

Two of the earliest mills were Alexander and Duncan Munro's mill on Geham Creek and E.W. Pechey's mill at Highfields on the Main Range. Munro's mill was christened 'Argyle Mills' by Mrs Munro in August 1874. The brothers constructed a tramway down into the Perseverance area in the Esk Shire in the late 1890s. It ran from Hampton railway station, on the Crow's Nest Branch, down into the Perseverance Valley for seven miles to the Palm Tree mill and was extended for four and a half miles in 1903-5. The tramway was operated by horses and bullocks until 1903 and the timber was marketed through Hampton. The line was forty pound rail laid in packed earth; there were two bridges. Munros bought two Shay locomotives (Nos. 906 and 2097) from Lima Company; one worked the line to Hampton hauling timber and the other hauled logs in from Bunker's Hill in the Ravensbourne area. On the way into the mill the loco pushed three trucks loaded with logs and hauled three trucks of logs. Men also parbuckled logs onto the trucks by using pulleys around a tree and the log. Eight bullock teams also hauled logs into the mill. The Palm Tree mill was steam powered and had five saws. Men worked ten hour days for 3s. per day and the purpose of the electricity provided by dynamo was to allow the mill to work at night.

A community of twenty cottages surrounded the mill. Munros ran a store and John Kynock had a butcher shop. The mill also supported a football team. The winch was taken to Bunkers Hill in 1920 to load logs at the end of the line. It was eventually sold to Jim Barbour of Esk, who used it for hauling pine logs to load them onto road waggons. The winch was abandoned by Owen Affleck about 1940

History of the Shire of Esk

in the bush at Ravensbourne, where it still lies. The mill was closed by Bob Walker, the lessee, in 1936 when the operation of the sawmilling industry was changing radically.

Lars Andersen's sawmills were the largest timber enterprise in the Brisbane Valley. He was born in Gronholt, Sjalland in Denmark, his father, Anders Nielsen Andersen, was a builder, and Lars had been apprenticed in a drawing office and worked as a builder. At the age of 20 in 1880 he immigrated to Brisbane. On arrival at Esk he continued building to cope with the influx of people, erecting shops and houses in the town, then awaiting the imminent arrival of the railway and also buildings on graziers' runs and houses on selections. His brother, Jason C. Andersen, had worked at Maryborough and Stanthorpe and together with brother, Hans Peter, they went into partnership in a sawmill in Ipswich Street, Esk, in 1885. Jason was the wheelwright, Hans the blacksmith, and Lars the designer and builder. At first they employed seven men. The mill was shifted to Factory Lane in 1900 and Lars built his substantial home on the site of the old mill. Lars bought seven acres of the McDonald Estate along the creek and sold his old sawmilling plant to C.S. Langton, who had a mill at Eskdale. Aged twenty-eight Lars married Janet Dunlop, second daughter of James and Mrs Dunlop of 'Tinton' at Biarra and had eight children (Evelyn,

Lars Roderick, James Alexander, Jean Karen, Adam William and Karen). Two sons, James and Arthur, predeceased Lars who died aged 80 on 26 September 1941.¹²

Lars Andersen's policy was to buy more and more timber land as it became available. Because transport was expensive and slow he started mills where the timber was located. He owned and worked a total of ten sawmills situated at Esk, Redbank Creek, Toogoolawah, Cressbrook Creek, Deongwah, Happy Valley, Beam Creek, Blackbutt, Wengenville, and Reedy Creek. The timber for all the mills, except those at Toogoolawah and Reedy Creek, came from Andersen's own land and Crown Lands Reserves. He used bullock waggons to haul the logs to the edges of ridges then used winders, tramlines, and flying foxes to lower logs to loading areas. He built three tramlines, the first one at Cressbrook and Kipper Creeks, the second at Wengenville in the Bunya Mountains. The third was at Beam Creek near Somerset Dam, where there was one of the most spectacular flying foxes ever used. Horses or steam traction engines transported logs to the mills. The well-known Lauterille traction engine was brought from South Africa in 1911 and hauled logs into Esk from Kipper and Cressbrook Creeks creating quite a scene in Ipswich Street, Esk, hauling three waggons of logs or timber into the town. It

Lars Andersen's Esk sawmill, 1907.

John Oxley Library



damaged culverts on roads between Toogoolawah and Mount Beppo in 1915 and Andersen was obliged to pay the Council £18 for repairs; that road was then closed to traction engine use. One of Andersen's expensive problems was the necessity of paying wheel tax to both Esk and Nanango Shires on waggons travelling between both mills in 1905, because, according to the Shires' By Laws, the tax had to be paid to each Council through whose shire the waggon travelled; he was also a constant complainant to the Council throughout 1906 to 1909 about the condition of the roads in the Kipper and Cressbrook Creeks area where he and Martin had a mill near James Barbour's property.¹³

The Esk mill, built to Lars's design, was 220 feet long by 120 feet wide with no centre posts. In the 1890s Lars bought a seventy-five horsepower Beam steam engine with a fourteen foot fly wheel from James Tyson, Queensland's pastoralist millionaire of Jondaryan. It had been used on various Darling Down stations since the 1860s. This Woolf double-acting compound engine, weighing twelve tons, powered the mill until 1945. The cog wheel was lagged over with wood to run the belts. There were three planing machines and two benches (breaking down and No.1 bench) which came from the old Mount Misery (Deongwar) mill. The driving wheels running the mill came from two old railway locomotives which Lars Andersen bought. The frame saw was made out of two other wheels from the locomotives. Harry Langton was foreman in the mill for many years and worked for Andersen's mill for fifty-five years. There were two men in the yard crosscutting logs and two to three teams of men including sniggers in the scrub, preparing pine for the mill. Before kilns and electricity were introduced in 1946 it took six weeks to dry the timber in the yard.

Lars profited out of the dairy industry with his 'invention' of the butter box, made of dressed pine free of knots. It proved to be a boon towards fully utilizing the hoop and bunya pines, using the 'tops' and making money out of what was once left as rubbish in the paddock and burnt; it also produced royalty for the Forestry Department.

The twenties were disastrous for Lars Andersen. In March 1924 his largest mill, at Esk, was destroyed by fire. One of the most up-to-date mills in southern Queensland became a mass of ruined machinery and twisted iron. He had recently purchased a motor lorry with trailer for hauling timber, then considered the most efficient method of transport, having sold the winder and tramway complex at Kipper Creek to James Campbell and Sons in 1922. The family, nevertheless, planned to

rebuild within a few months with the new machinery.¹⁴

Lars Andersen had opened a sawmill at Toogoolawah in 1909. His son, A.D. Andersen, was manager. The old Esk mill boiler was installed. One of the mill's difficulties was the transport of timber to the mill as traction engines were prohibited by the Shire Council from using the roads from Mount Beppo to Toogoolawah, and from the Deer Reserve to Toogoolawah. The mill had the usual waste problems in the creek but also suffered labour troubles in the early 1920s. The AWU intervened stating that the 'tailor-out' man had to work in the mill only. The management paid off the men and hired non-unionists in January 1921. In February 1922 there was a severe fire in the mill damaging the breaking down bench, the frame and a portion of the roof. Thirty to forty men fought the blaze in a bucket brigade and prevented it from spreading. H.A. Teske purchased the mill in 1925 from Andersens; W. Porter was mill foreman and the same staff continued. The Teske family has retained control of the mill since, gathering timber from surrounding forestry areas; during the 1930s depression they used relief labour to do extensive ringbarking.¹⁵

Andersen had an earlier mill, commonly known as Deongwar mill, at Kipper Creek. It serviced the Pinecliffe Scrub and was profitable because the timber was milled on site then hauled it into Esk by teams and traction engine. The mill was built in 1906 at the head of the creek, after the road was repaired by Council. A Timber Reserve of 3,350 acres was set aside nearby in 1907. That mill operated for several years through the War and sawn timber was transported in to Esk.¹⁶

In the early 1920s Andersen built an extensive tramway system to service his mill on Cressbrook Creek to the west. It involved a winder with two trolleys using gravity on a reciprocating movement on the eastern slope of Pinecliffe Mountain down to Cressbrook Creek. On the slope eight hundred metres of railway were constructed consisting of three hardwood rails three feet apart, spiked to sleepers on the ground. The sleepers, two feet six inches apart were also hardwood, four inches by three inches and eight feet long.

The trolleys used the outside rail and the middle one. A steel rope was connected to the trolley on the left and ran to the top and around a grooved pulley on a shaft and connected to another trolley using the right and centre rail. When the trolley on top was loaded with about 1,400 super feet of logs, the brake on the pulley shaft released to let the load travel to the bottom. The trolley at the bottom



Lars Andersen's Cressbrook Creek incline tramway. 1920s.

would then move up and the trolleys would pass each other on a loop in the line half way. A telephone connected top and bottom loading ramps. The line down Pinecliffe was very steep and only levelled out to cross the bridge over Cressbrook Creek. From Cressbrook Creek a two rail tramway ran at right angles to the mountain line for one mile to the sawmill.

The tramway was opened on Saturday 26 August 1922 by Cr Alex Smith. A picnic luncheon was held and 250 to 300 residents from Esk and nearby areas attended. Loads of 1200, 1000 and 1150 super feet of log timber were brought down the Pinecliffe incline with grades of 1 in 1, 1 in 1.5, and 1 in 3. Andersen relinquished his interest in the mill around 1930 when he sold it to James Campbell and Sons of Brisbane. They then continued to open up the Pinecliffe Scrub for the Brisbane market.¹⁷

In 1903 while the railway was still under construction Andersen opened a mill at Blackbutt, as did E. Emerson. Up until that time isolation had forced settlers to burn thousands of super feet of valuable timber. Andersen and Emerson sent timber to Moorabool and to Crow's Nest. In 1905 their mills produced eight to ten thousand super feet of timber per day with many pine logs averaging eight hundred to one thousand super feet each with three to four logs per tree. Andersen's manager was W.E. Houston and he employed ten men in addition to hauliers and fellers. These timbermen relaxed alcoholically on weekends. By 1912 James F. Brett of Brett and Company had taken over as manager of Andersen's sawmill.¹⁸

Andersen had another very profitable mill at Somerset Dam. Not only was he able to mill the smoked timber off ridges surrounding the dam site, but he also supplied timber for over 150 houses and buildings. Further, he supplied pine timber for the scaffolding for the dam wall. He had had a sawmill, known as Mt Brisbane, far up Beam Creek before 1924. After the closure of that mill he had an incline tramway at the head of the creek, rising about eight hundred feet in less than a mile. At the bottom the logs were loaded on lorries and taken to Esk mill. At the southern end of that timbered area the terrain was too steep for an incline and a flying fox was installed, which he demonstrated on 25 February 1934. It was supported by poles at the top end and attached to a tree at the bottom, near the site of the service station at Somerset Dam. At one point the wire was one hundred and fifty feet above the ground. It carried two twelve inch grooved pulleys which supported the log below the wire; the braking system was a tail rope. Passengers also used the flying fox as a form of transport to and from work.

When all the mills were fully operational Lars employed approximately five hundred people, including scrub workers, timber fellers, horse and bullock teamsters, lorry drivers, and the mill workers — the benchmen, tailor-outers, yardmen, office clerks. There were full-time saddlers and the joinery works employed almost sixty workers. Lars owned thirteen houses in Esk and built single men's quarters which he let out, in the mill area, and a butcher shop was opened in Esk to service mill workers. His high reputation developed because of the fair wages and conditions and the flow-on to the local community from his excellent profits in the first thirty years of operations. He was known locally as a humble man, intensely proud and he flew the Australian flag in front of his large house in Ipswich Street. Lars Andersen's sons Arthur and Rod managed the mill until after Lars's death and his grandson, Garth, was manager when the mill was sold in 1971. It was then not a viable business for the family, which had suffered the inevitable decline of the timber milling industry when timber stands were worked out.¹⁹

Brown and Broad of Brisbane began sawmilling in the Valley in 1906. They were working in the Arababy and Byron's Creeks areas and contributed to the repairs of roads in that area. They were also interested in timber in the Reedy Creek Road area. In 1907 they were keen to run a traction engine on the road from Esk to Mount Brisbane and to do so they supplied the timber and an extra girder for strengthening the culvert on the Esk side of the Crossdale Hotel. As Brown and Broad were wanting to use three traction engines on the road from their Byron Creek sawmill in 1908 the Council upgraded the road knowing that they would earn £45 a year in wheel tax from the company.

There was already quite a deal of competition within the close-knit community near the Byron Creek sawmill. Teamsters used a small reserve near the mill for spelling their bullocks, making it unhygienic for Parfitt to erect a cream depot there in 1907, as Mrs C.J. Bowman had pointed out to Council in 1907. In 1908, after a washout on the road, the company stood down employees, which quickly forced the Council to repair the road. Mrs C.J. Bowman again complained because logs tore up the road making it impossible for farmers to negotiate it; she had already spent £15 on repairing it. There appeared to be a process of cross purposes at Mt Byron between Brown and Broads, the Council, and Mrs Bowman who even wanted to fence off a lane along the public road at Reedy Creek effectively blocking the mill's traction engines. In 1911 the company laid a three foot



Toogoolawah sawmill. c. 1910.

John Oxley Library

gauge horse tramway up Reedy Creek to their timber stands; it was completed in February 1912. The bridge over the Brisbane River had to be repaired to enable the traction engine to haul the necessary rails. In 1914 the company fitted spark arresters to the traction engines which must have pleased Mrs Bowman who was always worried about fires. In fact her lot as a property manager amidst aggressive timbermen must have been trying. Brown and Broad built a second tramway, along a road up Byron Creek, in December 1915. By the end of the War the Council had become frustrated with the damage done to roads by sawmillers and refused to repair the roads in the Mt Byron area unless the sawmilling company contributed. Brown and Broad refused and the mill evidently closed.²⁰

Brown and Broad had another sawmill in the Valley, at Moore. It was on the banks of Wallaby Creek across the road from the railway. They had just opened it in October 1909 when they secured the contract for the manufacture of butter boxes for several dairy companies. By 1916 the mill was polluting the creek, forcing the Council to act.²¹

There were at least two firewood mills at Coominya — Bunnay's and Barbat's. They operated between the two Wars supplying

Brisbane and Ipswich firewood suppliers by rail. Barbat had established his mill in 1911 on the present site of Bellevue Homestead, with a short tramway across the road to the station. Arthur Barbat was manager and there were sixteen men employed. On average thirty thousand super feet of logs were handled per week. Pine and hardwood came from Blackbutt by train. Their main contracts were for railway waggons and telephone pole crossarms. Barbat's mill created quite a building boom at Coominya before the first War; however, there was a downturn when Arthur Barbat went to the Front in 1915. The firewood mill obtained its logs from within a twenty mile radius of Coominya and hauled them in by half a dozen bullock teams.

Life for these mill employees was not easy, especially in winter. There was little meat available at fair prices so some young men shot parrots for food. Work at the boiler was the best and that job always went to a certificated engine driver, usually from the Ipswich coalfields.

J. Hayes had the second firewood mill, commencing in 1923. He had sent eighty-five thousand tons of firewood to Brisbane by 1940, when he retired because of a stroke and sold the mill to H. McLaughlin. D. Munro from Charleville, a relative of McLaughlin, was appointed manager.

They installed an electric motor and used lorries to transport the logs.²²

There was a mill in Fernvale from 1902 where A.J. Raymond and Company acquired land and commenced installing their mill in May; they had already complained at the high rail freights. The main sawmillers at Fernvale, however, have been the Denning family, who had also had mills at Lowood and Reedy Creek.

William Denning developed the mill and his life story illustrates the life of enterprising sawmillers. He was born at Abersychan, in Monmouthshire, Wales, on 20 August 1863 and arrived in Queensland on the *Golden City* in 1865. He attended the Catholic School at Redbank and Glamorgan Vale School before working for his uncle who had a pit saw in the Lowood area. William started a sawmill with a six horsepower engine at Glamorgan Vale on the land they had selected in the hill country. He married Alicia Heck in 1883, went to Lowood in 1889, and erected a larger mill with a fourteen horsepower portable engine; in 1893 he built a new mill. Denning Brothers later bought the plant of Villeneuve sawmill from F. V. Nicholson.

After the 1893 flood he went to Palen Creek in the Beaudesert area but moved back to the Valley in 1904, erecting a mill at Mt Brisbane where he operated for five years before returning to Lowood. He then moved to Fernvale and later operated mills at Tarong, and a timber yard at Sandgate to supply the Brisbane market. He and his wife had thirteen children and co-incidentally he was for thirty years superintendent of the Methodist Sunday Schools in his town.²³

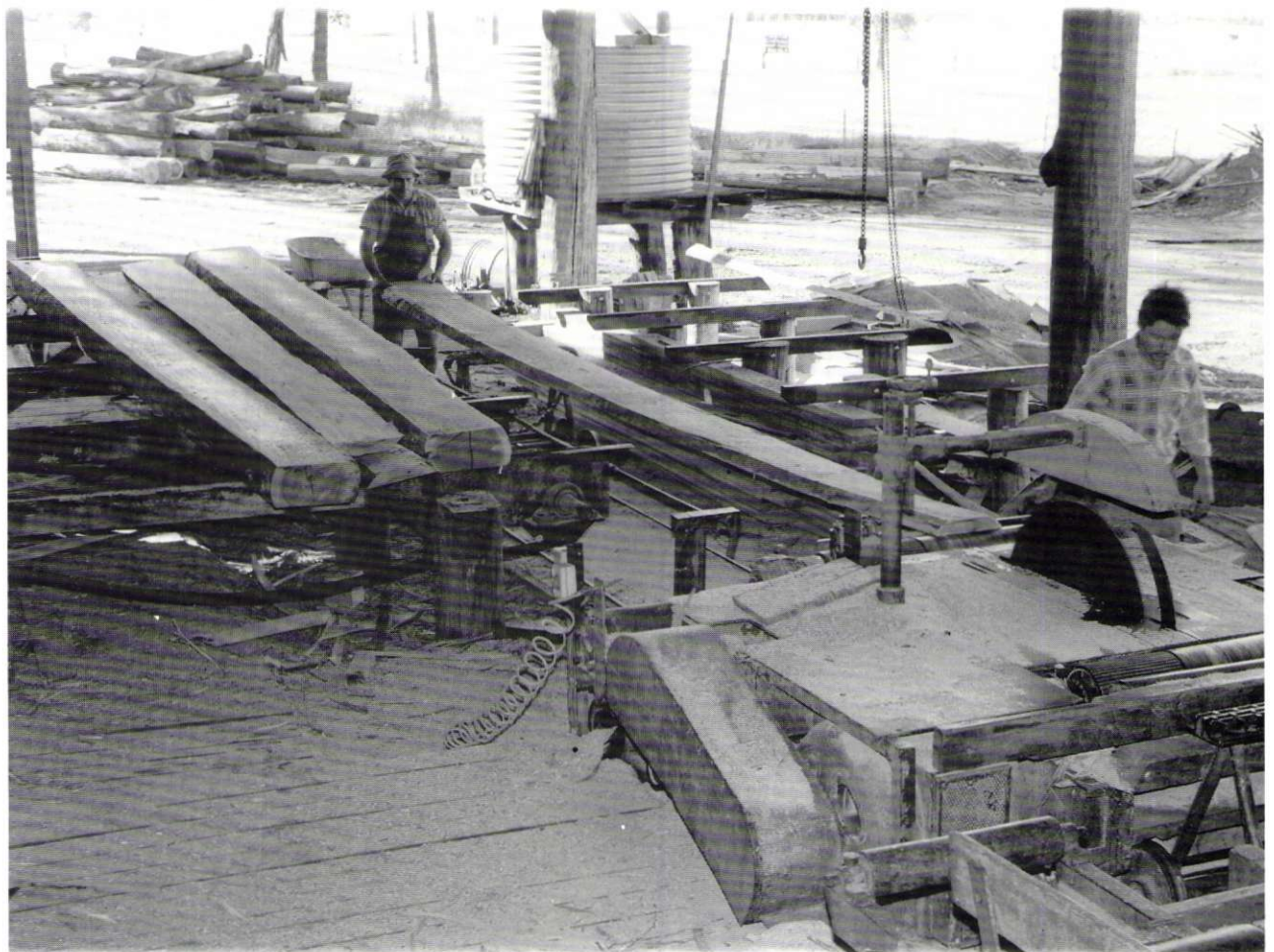
The sawmill at Linville was opened in 1912. Its establishment benefitted by the coming of the railway in October 1910 and the recent opening of the land for selection. The Carseldine family prospered from timber cut on their selections as their view was the common one of farmers — 'where there are trees there is no water and to run a dairy farm you need water'. Fox bought land from the Carseldines for the mill. Foxes had traction engines early. Huge loads were carted to the railway by bullocks and later by Thornycroft lorries. Four men were employed loading the railway trucks. A million super feet used to leave the town weekly. That timber originally came down the steep slopes in wooden chutes. The mill closed after the war and resumed in 1931 after the timber slump of the twenties. It has continued since the death of Fox in 1942 until the present. In 1983 it was managed by Eric Morgan but timber came from great distances such as Warwick and

Killarney. The waste was sold to grape growers in the Valley and the Kraft factory at Quinalow.²⁴

The Hancock family also has been heavily involved in the Brisbane Valley timber industry, starting in the Lowood and Rosewood areas with land selections in the mid 1860s. The family arrived in Australia on 5 November 1856 and Josiah and Thomas Hancock first tried the Gympie goldfield, pitsawing timber for miners. They returned to Ipswich and established a four horsepower engine for sawing, upgrading this as business improved. By the 1880s the brothers had split up, Thomas staying in Ipswich and Josiah going to Brisbane. They established a mill in Lowood on the western side of Mt Hancock on the Lowood — Glamorgan Vale road where, at the time of the arrival of the railway in Lowood in 1884, they cut pine. Then they combined in 1900 to establish a large mill at Millmerby, half a mile from Tooloorum. It was located in the thick of the forests with a good water supply; it was more economical to mill the timber locally to save both Forestry Department royalties and railway freight. An old steam engine was the power unit. Their mill supported a local community around Crossdale for nearly a quarter century. In 1927 they were beaten by increasing royalties, lack of timber, competition from imports and rising wages costs. These problems were the focus of the sawmillers' strong antagonism towards the government, especially forester E.H.F. Swain, who was removed by the Forgan Smith government.

The Hancocks recovered and changed with the industry towards supplying plywood, peeling the logs rather than sawing them to provide larger panelling. By then the industry was regulated by the Queensland Plywood Board under the *Primary Producers Marketing Acts*. In 1937 the *Timber Licensing Act* tried to limit the amount of timber cut each year; every mill was obliged to hold a licence allowing it to cut a specified quota per year, based on the average for the three years before 1937. Systematic re-forestation was also begun in the 1930s.²⁵

Most of the timber for the Millmerby mill came from Tooloorum and Mt Brisbane stations. It was situated four miles east of Hugh Conroy's dip and teamsters brought sawn timber out through the lane near Mt Brisbane. It was managed by McIvor and Alf Hines and employed thirty men. The mill was closed in 1912 and Hancocks moved to Louisavale because of sawdust pollution in Tooloorum Creek. Josiah Hancock also had a sawmill at Mt Byron in 1906, even though Mrs C.J. Bowman objected.²⁶



Denning's Sawmill, Fernvale, 1987.

Terry Conway

The Hancocks erected a mill at Louisavale in 1912. The council had already repaired the Monsildale road first as well as making the road from Jimna Range to Monsildale station house trafficable. Louisavale became their most profitable mill and operated right through until 1930 because the family had a monopoly over the surrounding forests. The mill closed in 1930 for four years after the frame wheel broke; but it was economic conditions in the timber industry which really caused the shut-down. Six bullock teams were paid off and the other six hauled logs to Linville railway station to go to their other mills. The Louisavale mill re-opened in May 1934 with Mr Watt as manager. The company were using lorries to haul timber and the Council refused to do any more work on the roads than to keep them trafficable. In 1936 a scheme for road maintenance was negotiated between the company and the Council; Mr Watt collected the mill and lorry drivers' shares and the Council contributed one penny per super foot of timber carried over the road from Louisavale to Linville. Mr Watt eventually removed the mill to Monsildale.²⁷

Pattersons had a sawmill at Moore. It operated before World War I. They were always prepared to contribute to road maintenance and to reasonable conditions concerning sawdust pollution. They obtained their timber from the Kipper Creek area and the slopes of the Blackbutt Range. The old mill buildings were eventually removed in 1961 and the Council obtained the site (Allotment 3 of Section 3) in Moore as a depot.²⁸

In 1910 the Queensland Box Company, a subsidiary of Brown and Broad, had a sawmill at Arababy Creek near Moore. They had contributed to the repairs of the road to Moore but in 1918 condition of Allery's Crossing was so bad that the company threatened to close the mill unless the Council made the crossing trafficable. The history of this mill since the first World War is unknown.²⁹

Today the only surviving mills in the Esk Shire are Denning's at Fernvale, Werner's at Toogoolawah, Hoffman's at Esk. Mechanization, road transport and the Forestry Department control the industry.

ENDNOTES

1. *NTQ Brisbane Valley* 1976; Murphy, J.E. and Easton E.W., *Wilderness to Wealth* (Nanango, Historical Committee, 1950) p331; C.J.J. Watson, 'Queensland Forests and Timbers', *Queensland Geographical Journal* Vol 55 (1953-1954) pp33-41; QT 12 February 1878; Q 9 July 1887 p4,713; ER 1 June 1898; DM 13 June 1929; ESKM 1 June 1898.
2. NSW GG 6 April 1839 p394 and 19 April 1842 p587; MBC 12 December 1846 and 4 March 1848; NA 12 October 1858; BC 21 August 1863; QT 21 and 30 March 1878; BVS 28 June 1957; For details of the Hancocks' selections see the chapter on Land Selection; D.B. Waterson, *Squatter, Selector and Storekeeper: a History of the Darling Downs 1859-1893* (Sydney, University Press, 1968) p89.
3. 89/1, (Fryer, UQ); QT 19 July 1879 p3 c4, 24 April 1880 p3 and 8 January 1938; BC 12 July 1884 p5 c2.
4. QPD 3 September 1889 (Question from O'Sullivan to Secretary for Lands.); ESKM 28 June 1889; Barton, Charles H., *Forestry in Queensland-Illustrated Guide* (Brisbane, Government Printer, 1888); QV&P 1889 Vol 3 pp349-352.
5. Commissioner for Railways *Annual Reports* 1899-1915; JLC 1900 Vol 3 p364; Queensland Intelligence and Tourist Bureau, *Lockyer and Stanley* 1908 p95; *The Cressbrook Estate* (The Pastoral Homes of Australia Series, 1910 approx.) (JOL) pp7-9; ESKM 9 April 1914 p4; LWDM 2 November 1914 p303; ESKM 17 May 1889; ESKM 7 April 1915 p86.
6. *The Commercial Motor* 15 January 1924. (JOL Cuttings); Private interview by the author with Mr and Mrs H. Langton, Esk, 22 June 1986.
7. ESKM 9 and 23 December 1887 and 6 May 1903.
8. QV&P 1887 Vol 4 p463.
9. *The following sources were supplied by Mr. Peter Clyburn, Geebung, whose wife, Marion, is a descendent of the Blanks of Esk: IMM/112 p200 (Z1), IMM/250 f.62, Land order C63/1274, SCT/CF3 Certificate No 161, Selections 2561, 2562, 2572, 3709, 3925, 4419, 4856, and 7193, LAN/P29-31, QSA; BVS 5 June 1959; QT 18 June 1971; Reminiscences of Ann Ryan, Taringa, 12 August 1971; Private interview by the author with Mr Joe Martin, Esk, 19 July 1986.*
10. Private interview by the author with Mr Joe Martin, Esk, 19 July 1986.
11. R.K. Morgan, 'Munro's Hampton Tramway' *Light Railways* No 61 (July 1978) pp5-16; Note by John Kerr on the Perseverance Tramway in *Light Railways* No 63 (January 1970) p20; BC 13 August 1874 p3 c1 quoting *Darling Downs Gazettes*.
12. ER 31 March 1934; QT 3 April 1900; Andersen Family papers; Private interview by author with Mr and Mrs H. Langton, 22 June 1986.
13. ESKM 13 December 1905 p269 and 2 June 1915 p105; QT 17 February 1911 p6.
14. J.D. Kerr, and M.M. Philpott, 'Lars Andersen's Timber Tramways' *Queensland Heritage* Vol 2 No 9 (November 1973) pp21-29; Private interview by the author with Mr and Mrs H. Langton, Esk, 22 June 1986; ER 10 February 1934; QT 7 April 1924 p7.
15. *The Cressbrook Estate* (JOL) pp7-9; ESKM 26 April 1916 p190; QT 11 and 19 January 1921 p5 and p3 respectively, 1 February 1922 p2 and 1 January 1925.
16. ESKM 27 June 1906 p315; Private interview by the author with Mr & Mrs H. Langton 22 June 1986; QGG 1907 Vol 2 p265; The mill was situated on 1280 acres Portion 26, in the Parish of Deongwar.
17. Kerr and Philpott *op cit*; Joe Walker, *Joe's Book: Facts and Theories on the Bunya Mountains* (Bell, the author, 1977) p56; BC 30 August 1922; BVS 9 December 1960.
18. QT 18 February 1904 and 14 March 1905; J.E. Murphy, and E.W. Easton, *Wilderness to Wealth op.cit.* p.110; Batch 1C, HB45, A/8853, QSA.
19. Andersen Family Papers held by descendants of Lars Andersen.
20. ESKM 10 October 1906 p346 and 27 February 1907, 13 June 1907, 14 November 1907 p81, 14 November 1907, 20 February 1908, 25 March 1909 p225, 18 June 1914 p20, 22 September 1915 p129, 22 December 1915 pp155-156, 20 November 1918 pp536-537 and 18 December 1918 p539; QT 6 October 1911 p6, 24 August and 10 November 1911 p2 and 23 February 1912 p 2; Brown and Broad's second tramway was on Portion 128V to 97V in the Parish of Neara.
21. File 10/1838, A/12,392, QSA; ESKM 2 June 1915 p104 and 20 December 1916 p275.
22. QT 23 March 1911 p3, 9 October 1913 p3, 27 August 1915 p6, and 10 January 1986 p6; BVKS 6 June 1986 p4; ER 18 October 1940.
23. QT 14 October 1893, 6 and 27 May 1902, 15 July 1902 and 25 July 1933; The Mount Brisbane mill was between portions 4 and 21a, Parish of Dixon. Denning had a long lease of land along the road between the Provisional School and Reedy Creek, which was envied by local graziers, McConnel and Bigge. (ESKM 22 June 1904 and 3 August 1904.)
24. ESKM 23 February 1916 p169; CHTBA 30 November 1983 p38; ER 17 January 1931.
25. E.S. Hancock, 'The Queensland Timber Industry: Early History and Development' RHSQJ Vol 9 No 1 (1969-1970) pp172-176; QT 8 January 1938.
26. Conroy family, 'Tookoorum' (JOL); 'Orion', *Esk Shire* 1908; ESKM 5 March, 23 July, 21 May, 25 June and 24 September 1902, 8 July, 8 October and 9 December 1903, 11 April 1904, 27 June 1906 p315 and 25 July 1906 p322; Hancock's Mt Byron mill was on the reserve between Portions 86 and 133, Parish of Byron.
27. ESKM 11 November 1909 p292, 18 July 1928 p589 and 11 May 1936; QT 6 May 1910 p8, 9 and 24 April 1930; BVA 16 May 1934; ESKM 9 May 1934 p334.
28. ESKM 5 September 1906 p337, 22 September 1915 p128, 24 May 1916 p205, 8 June 1927 pp326-327, 16 November 1961 p2,035 and 15 July 1971 p9,417.
29. QT 6 May 1910 p8; ESKM 23 January 1918 p412.