



SPENCER GREEN'S EUCALYPTUS OIL STILL, BUDAWANG.

remaining hotel, the Rising Sun, led to a further down-turn in the economy. However, new and old industries survived and even flourished when prices were high. The young sons of the settlers such as Allan Radburn and his brothers turned to rabbiting as a part-time income. At first the carcasses were taken to Braidwood every second day to the freezing works. Later, when the relative prices changed, the skins only were retained and sold. Before the first World War, in the 1930s, and particularly after the second World War, the high prices for eucalyptus oil led to many stills being established on the banks of the creeks.

Timber mills had been established in the early days of settlement to meet the demand for pit props and for hard wood for building purposes. Some were built on the river and were worked by water power and others used steam power. Mountain ash eucalyptus sieberi, also called silver topped ash, and messmate eucalyptus obliqua were local timbers much valued for their strength and durability. Late in 1915 George McRae and Reuben Burke, with the assistance of William Radburn, erected a sawmill on the original block occupied by McRae, Ross and Steele. It was steam driven and a boiler of 10 tons weight, which came from a dredge on the Araluen river, was hauled to the site of the mill. The steam operated a circular saw for the cutting of the logs, and a vertical saw for cutting the flitches — ie the lengths of the logs — which were then cut to the required sizes.

Logs were brought in from the nearby forests and later from further afield by bullock wagon teams. However in 1923 the mill closed down and it was moved to Bombay, west of Braidwood, where it was worked until 1928. Before it was closed, sufficient timber was cut for Reuben Burke to build a store at Mongarlowe village. Other McRae descendants operated mills nearer the headwaters of the Mongarlowe river, adjacent to the Monga forest.

Since the 1950s the rabbits have been controlled by myxomatosis, the market for eucalyptus oil is much smaller, and the timber mills have closed. Viable grazing properties are confined to the areas of basalt soil. However, the effect of drought on cattle and sheep numbers has been lessened by improved water conservation and the ease with which modern transport brings fodder in to the district and takes animals out for agistment in other areas. A local horse training property and the Bondola trout farm with multiple tourist attractions have diversified rural land use in the last few years.

The population of Mongarlowe has stabilised and is now increasing. Its seclusion and the beauty of the streams, the mountains and the native vegetation have attracted artists, craftspeople, writers and conservationists. New houses are being built and old ones restored. The Tombarra Holiday Units, one kilometre from the village, attract visitors from the cities seeking a bush holiday.

Many of the new young residents are seeking the advice and stories of the past from the old people born at the turn of the century, and eucalyptus oil is being distilled again, with their guidance. The Cricket Club is active again and the neglected community hall and cricket ground five kilometres north of the village, which served both the Mongarlowe and Charleys Forest communities, is receiving attention. We hope this book telling the story of Mongarlowe and the Little River goldfields will contribute to the renaissance of community life.

This story was written by Netta Ellis as the Introduction to 'Mongarlowe and the Little River Goldfields' by Bruce Russell. It was first published by the Braidwood and District Historical Society © 1989.

century made the grazing industry even more of a gamble and gradually with the falling gold returns the population declined. In 1908 as a result of the enquiry into the renewal of hotel licences in south-eastern NSW, the population was estimated at only 300. The closure of the only

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