

steam workshop destroyed



Above Aerial photograph of Yarloop found on the internet the day after the fires confirms the worst fears . It can be positively identified as part of Steam Workshops from the railway line layout .

With the news of the devastating Yarloop fires South of Perth the human tragedy involved has been adequately covered but it has been difficult to find much on the fate of the historic Millers Timber Steam Workshops .

Unfortunately they appear to have been completely destroyed !



Above Photograph taken by Warwick Bryce in 2011 from the spot marked by the arrow in the top photo . The weatherboard building on his right is the Company Engineering Store. All that is left are mangled sheets of iron.



Left Dave Mickle could be about to pick boiler hardware such as gauge glasses , steam fittings and asbestos gaskets or draw tools including welding rods and grinding wheels from the shelves as long as he updates the store stock cards still in place.

Now all is no more.

Warwick photo

The Yarloop Steam Workshops date back to 1901 when the Millar Bros were one of West Australia's largest timber exporters with around 26 major bush mills operating in the South West. Situated at the edge of the forest below the escarpment and connected to the mills by an extensive narrow gauge network the workshop became the heart of milling operations. The need to be able to make things locally was critical as new machines and replacement parts to keep the mills running would often take 6 months to procure from overseas. Little was beyond the workshops engineering capability, the whole process could be handled in house from design, pattern making, iron & brass casting and machining and finally erection. So fully equipped are the workshops that even a full size steam locomotive was made



Above 2011 photograph of the steam locomotive beside the equipment in the same workshop in which it was built. What greater context could you get than this?

Note the inflammable nature of the wooden floor and building.

Supplementing this are facilities for maintenance including a saw sharpening shop, blacksmith, wheelwrights and even boiler repairs were undertaken. There was practically nothing this steam driven



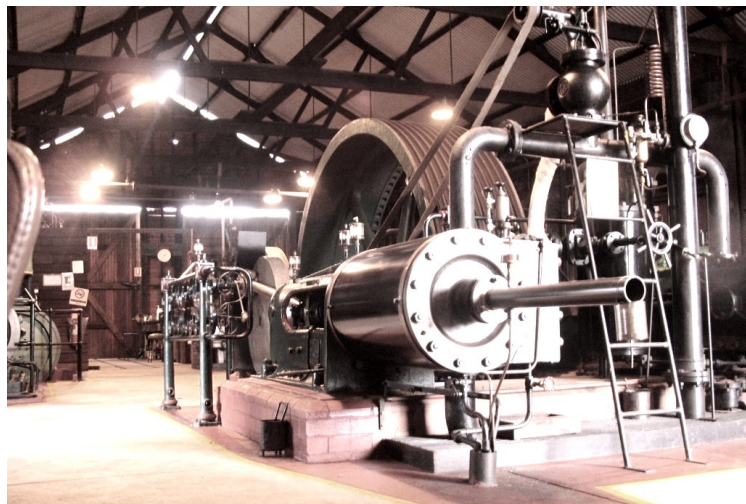
Above Tools still where they were used time as though the workers could come back tomorrow with their job sheets in the office, tools still on their benches, stores on the shelves and rolling stock ready for the next day. Over the next 50 years its value was

workshop with it's staff of up to 100 could not make and repair. Closed in 1978 after the company was taken over and operations consolidated at another site the workshops were left intact.

Virtually frozen in

slowly recognized and thanks to preservation and documentation by volunteers has become a major focal point for the local community. The workshops have been deliberately left preserved but unrestored to give an insight into the people who worked there, their work life, skills and deeds.

On the other hand an Engine house was established by another group of enthusiasts where many beautifully restored giant



Above A glimpse of the weatherboard "Engine House" Bruce Pariossien photo

engines from the district have been installed and arranged to be demonstrated under steam regularly. As a record of a Steam Driven Workshop associated with the Timber Industry its historical, archival and lifestyle worth is recognized internationally. (Based on yarloopworkshops.com.au promotional material and various personal accounts)

That is until 10:30 pm Thurs 7 January 2011 when consumed by the catastrophic fire

Started by lightening the Wareena fire also took 2 lives, destroyed 128 houses and burnt 71,000 hectares.

Alas it is no more

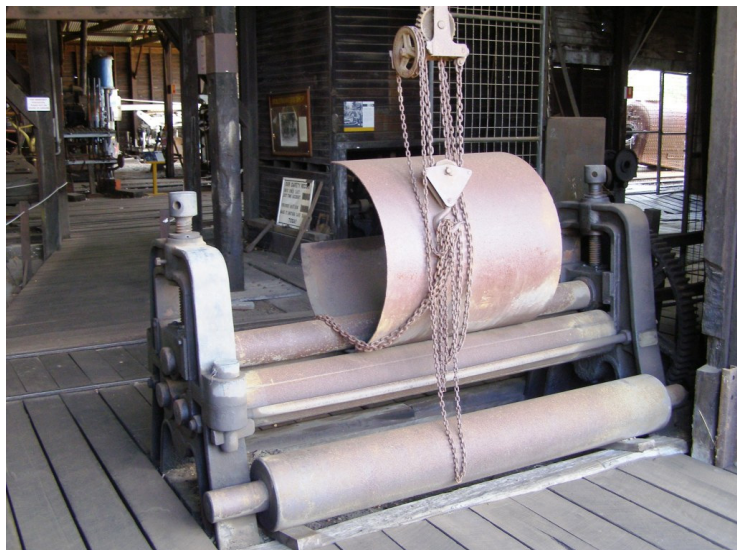


Above Internet photo tagged Emma McIntosh shows the historic Yarloop workshops and steam museum burning.

The loss of machinery is devastating enough but similar examples of this type of equipment still exist in other collections. The real tragedy is the loss of its context, the associated surrounding and settings of the equipment that gives the full story of how and what it was used for and the working conditions and skills of the people who worked in a 1900's bush

workshop. This can never be replaced.

Take for example the tripple roll metal bender for forming boiler barrels.



Above 2011 photo of the Boiler Shops tripple roll bender still set up with its last job in place. Now gone forever the background of this machine has been traced back to James Watt.

In an interview on Radio National after the fire it was mentioned that on a recent visit by a Manchester Professor of Steam Age Engineering Lew Richards that on a visit he was



Above Destroyed portable engine left and Diesel shunter right in the ruins will be recognizable by previous visitors to the workshops. Photo from the Australian

emotionally overcome to recognize the Boilershops 3 roll bender as one that he had designed still set up in its correct context. What is even more significant is that the Professor is a descendant of one of James Watt's cohorts. Now there are other 3 roll benders but how many will have a provenance that can be traced back to the father of the modern steam engine. The professor considered Yarloop as one of the finest examples in the world of a virtually complete large scale steam workshop, it extended even down to the paper

work for tomorrow still on the desks.



Above So complete was the archival material that books and ledgers were still on the desks.

Up until Jan 2016 the calendar still showed Monday 29 December 1975.

As such it was regarded as a World renowned Heritage Site.

What a tragedy, it can never be replaced.

Thanks to people who assisted with this article

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Prepared by Warwick Bryce for

STEAM SUPREME

Newsletter of the Melbourne
Steam traction Engine Club

Around the Club Trencher

Peter Morris tried out his Allen of Oxford trencher for the first time last weekend. It is made in England in the 1950's to an American design by Parsons that looks pre WW2. to me being a wonderful assembly of shaft chains and gearboxes whizzing around in all directions at a great variety of speeds but works remarkably effectively cutting a smooth side trench and delivering the finely divided spoil in to a neat windrow at the side. This English version is powered by a Dorman 4 D four cylinder Diesel engine of antique design and surprisingly is not



fitted with a self starter but has to be hand cranked. Peter has cleverly fitted an electric starter with a friction drive that can be pushed against the exposed flywheel as there is no provision for a ring gear .

The firm goes back to 1874 when it was known as the Oxford Steam Ploughing works . Brought by John Allen in 1924 amongst other things they produced a number of steam rollers followed by cranes and excavators . In the 1950's & 60's John Allen & Sons produced a range of endless chain bucket trenchers to Parsons USA design but fitted with English engines. Peter's machine a 12/21 is one of these . It will be a show stopping display for our Melbourne Steam Traction engine Club March Rally rally

The firms is probably better known for it's famous motor scythe of which they built over 1/4 million between 1935 and 19703. The firm was taken over and eventually wound up in 1984 .

Warwick Bryce