



**Altona Laverton  
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# NEWSLETTER

## TRUGANINA EXPLOSIVE RESERVE DATA PROJECT THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

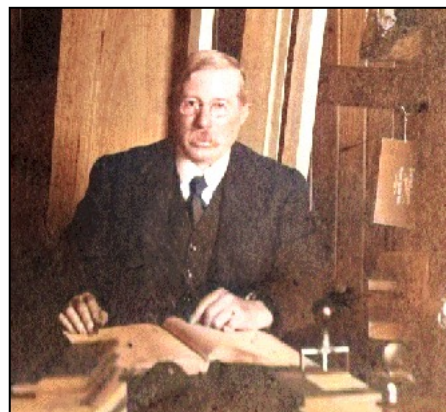


In this issue on Page 9 under the Heading “Homestead Happenings” we confirm that we are nearing the completion of the scanning and digitisation of the Truganina Explosive Reserve committees collection of documents ,plans, and images held by them ,PDF files, jpg and Tiff images will be contained within a searchable database ,intended to be made available to the Truganina representatives, for use to view information that has been collected and held in storage over the past years enabling this information to become available, with their permission to others for research purposes.

## THE FORMER TIMBER SEASONING PLANT IN MARKET STREET NEWPORT 1911-1956

A new resident in Altona, Mrs. Joan Picone has supplied photographs and information regarding her Great Grandfather, **John House** who was the patentee of a timber seasoning process which led to the establishment of a timber seasoning plant in Newport, commencing in 1911.

Newspaper reports indicate that there was originally some resistance to the seasoning process and The Age, March 23, 1911 reported that work had been delayed at Newport, advising that "Some time ago the Department of Mines and Forests had adopted a method of timber seasoning invented by Mr. House, and arranged for the erection of a seasoning plant and engineering sheds onsite at Newport, a railway siding has been constructed but the engine room had not yet commenced construction."



**Mr. John House in his office with specimen timber shown behind- (photo believed to be circa 1915)**



The Age, October 12, 1911

later reported that, fine grained woods are gradually increasing in favour for cabinet work and the woods are being properly seasoned at the Departments works at Newport.

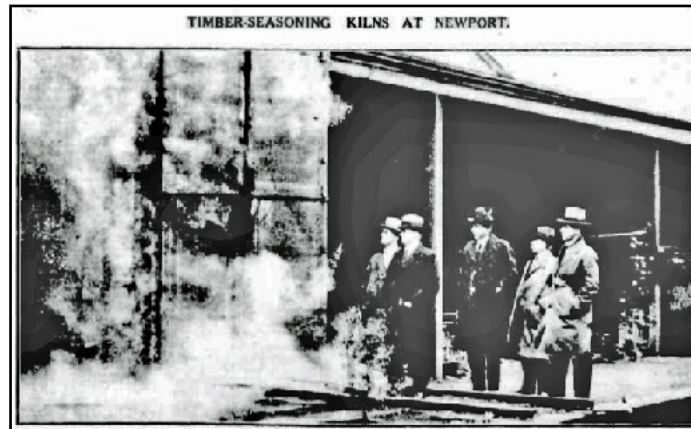
A news report in December 1911 indicated that the treatment was considered experimental and 60000 super feet of timber was under treatment.

By 1916 reports then indicated that the treatment had proven highly satisfactory and that timber sent out was fully equal to the best imported hardwood.

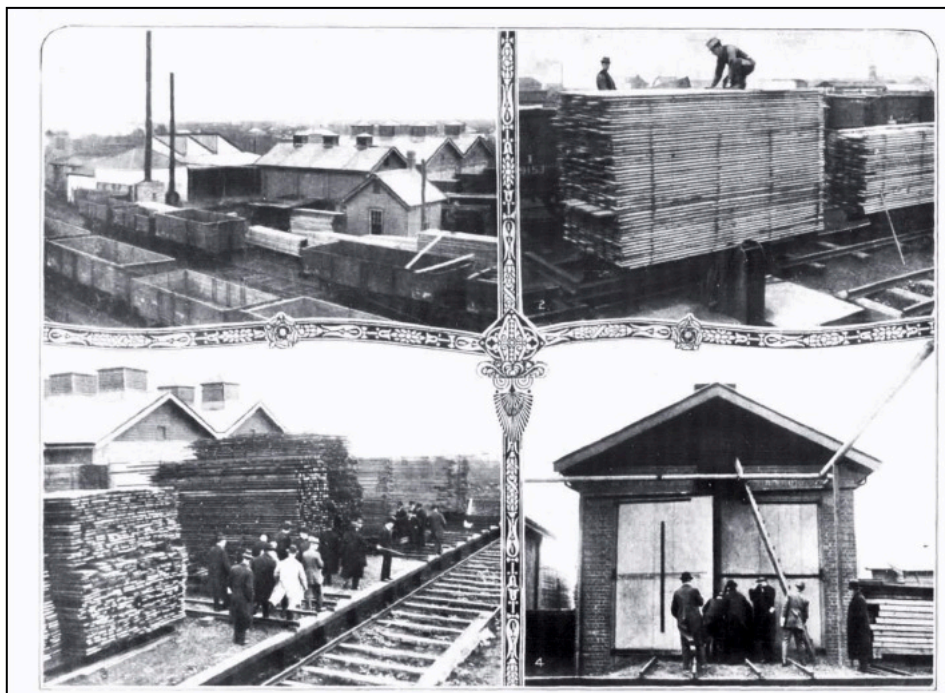
The "House Process" was purely a seasoning process, but in 1914 plans to close the plant were considered but opposed, and work continued. The discussions being held were regarding Natural drying and the artificial process of seasoning.

The process destroyed any borers that may be present, and timber was ready for use in 3 weeks instead of 3 years for the open air drying process.

In 1933 there were plans for the closure of the site but further. Experiments were needed and the operations continued until final closure in 1956.



Accompanied by members of the Forestry Commission, the Minister for Mines and Forests ,Mr.McNamara together with Mr.Owen Jones- (chairman of the commission),Mr.J.W.Cade (commissioner )Mr.J.House (superintendent )and Mr. A.V.Galbraith (secretary)



A 1916 visit to the site





The rail siding-Family Photo



The Superintendents House-Market Street Newport circa 1915

Family Photo



A long view of the site from the road-Family Photo



Family members in the house billiard room-John House Snr. standing, John House Jnr. at billiard table





The external loading area-Family Photo



The Planing Mill-Family Photo

## Newport Timber Seasoning Works

In 2020 **David Williams** formerly of the Department of Conservation and Environment, and later an Independent Consultant published an Article under the Title-

### Best Use of Victoria's Timbers

*Relevant sections of this interesting report are reproduced below.*



Logs stored in the Newport yard-State Library of Victoria image

### Introduction

The considerable potential for Victorian native hardwoods as fine timber was recognised as early as the mid-1800's but there was little or no inclination to develop this potential for a number of decades. The utilisation of native timbers was wasteful and the forests were extensively cleared in an uncontrolled manner. Eventually the Government established the State Forest Department in 1907 in recognition of the destruction of the forests and the growing rehabilitation liability. At this time there was also a call for the Government to support the establishment of a works to undertake research into techniques for producing seasoned timber from native hardwood species. Work commenced on the Newport Seasoning Works in 1910 with initial production in the following year.

The objectives of the seasoning works were to:

1. Undertake research into techniques for seasoning Victorian hardwood species and demonstrate the viability of producing Victorian hardwood seasoned timber.
2. Ensure the seasoning works were financially viable but not to maximise profits.

### Development

The seasoning works commenced operation at a modest scale with limited drying capacity in 1911. Kiln capacity was increased considerably to level of 1,250,000 super feet after five years. The "House" seasoning process was adopted (after the patentee Mr John House) which enabled the production of seasoned timber from green state in 2-3 weeks.

Almost the entire mill's production was supplied to the Newport Seasoning Works in the early years to help meet the increased demand for seasoned timber for the war effort and the post-work construction boom. There was less emphasis on technical research and promotion of the potential of seasoned timber enterprises during this period.

## Conclusion

The Newport Seasoning Works was established in 1911 to achieve the Government policy of ensuring the best use of Victorian hardwood species to provide maximum benefit to the State. Newport was ultimately successful at developing effective timber seasoning schedules and encouraging private millers moving into seasoned timber businesses, particularly for Mountain Ash seasoned timber. The works were also financially viable over the life of operations even though they were not profitable for the first half of the life of the works.

Efforts to meet demand for timber for public works during World War I and for the post-war construction boom changed the emphasis. There was less research and development effort and more production attention to meet increasing demand.

The lack of development of private enterprises for seasoned timber of other hardwood species and exhaustion of the Mountain Ash resource from the mid-1950's raised questions about the ongoing role for Newport which finally ceased operations in 1956 amid controversy about financial controls.

The enterprise was successful overall for four decades in meeting the objectives of ensuring best use of Victorian hardwood species and operating the works on a financial viable basis. Effective seasoning schedules were developed and private millers were encouraged to move into processing green timber into seasoned timber, particularly for Mountain Ash.

(From a report by David Williams 2020)



Mountain Ash forest-in the Dandenong Ranges



## Homestead Happenings



### DEVONSHIRE TEA

Devonshire tea has now been running for three months with customers enjoying their scones and tea inside the Homestead out of the cold Melbourne winter. It is great to see this event up and running and attracting so many people bring the Homestead alive again. We also wish to thank our faithful band of volunteers who assist in making our scones and serving customers on the Sunday.



### TRUGANINA EXPLOSIVE RESERVE

We have completed the heavy work of digitising and cataloguing around 3,000 items from the document and image collection at the explosive reserve. We have now entered these into a searchable database that we are currently testing and will soon make these items available, via Trug and ALHS, to the public who are undertaking research.



### ALHS CATALOGUE

Our cataloguer, Anne Cassar has just advised that we have now recorded over 3,000 items in our own collection and the number is still climbing and we are still collecting items to add to our current collection.



### ALHS AGM

Our Annual General Meeting is scheduled for September 10 at the Homestead commencing at 11.00am followed by refreshments. It is a great chance to catch up with fellow members.

## COLORISED IMAGES FROM THE PAST.



Altona Beach with the Pier in the background 1950c



Williamstown Beach 1903c

## A TUNNEL UNDER THE YARRA WAS ENVISAGED IN 1929

### REPORT FROM THE WILLIAMSTOWN ADVERTISER-JUNE 29,1929

PLANS WOULD COST £ 230,000 pounds.

"This In not such a chimerical idea is a lot of people think it is said Cr. Gray in the local council chamber on Tuesday night.He was referring to a suggested tunnel under the Yarra as the best means of connecting Williamstown with Melbourne.The Harbour Trust had written to the effect that while nothing could be done definitely at present, it would offer no objection to a practical scheme.

Cr.Gray went on to say that the estimated cost of the tunnel would be approximately £500,000, of which a council deputation had been given to understand the Harbour Trust would bear half.

Such a project was becoming more and more necessary.He thought also a move should be made in the matter of plans.

Cr.Paine supported Cr.Gray.A tunnel he said would be a necessity.It might be 19 years, but it must nevertheless come.

The Mayor: (commented) Having decided to build a new ferry, the matter is not one of urgency now.

Finally the question was referred back to the tunnel committee.

