



Friends of Cape Gantheaume Conservation Park



Duck Lagoon

Arthur James Weatherspoon was born at Two Wells, near Gawler, South Australia on 29th June 1882 and he died 26th August 1942 when he was 60 years of age. His wife Minnie Caroline [Lena] Boettcher was born 7th November 1880 at Blyth Plains, South Australia. They married on 30th July 1906 at the Registry Office, Adelaide, South Australia.

They were to have 8 children (presumably home births) and successfully reared 6 of them; Percy, Sidney, Roy, George, Mavis and Milly. Their twins called Harold and Charles were born 26th April 1910, but Harold died aged 3 days, and his twin brother Charles died aged 4 days.



Arthur cleared Duck Lagoon farm with hand tools, sowed crops and ran milking cows and sheep. They also had a fruit orchard and cream was manufactured. A few remains can be seen today of the sheep yards and horse stables. Arthur built his house and yards very close to the site of the Cygnet River Sawmill.

The shed behind the house was built by Arthur in approximately 1940 and was

used for storage, washing and cream separating.

Arthur strained his heart trying to put a beam on a roof of the log shed just west of the house. The doctor told him never to work again but while harvesting in the paddock with horses he had his first heart attack. At the age of sixty he had another heart attack while crutching sheep in the shearing shed south of the house which was fatal.

LIFE AT DUCK LAGOON

Life at Duck Lagoon was hard work, but there was still some fun to be had. Arthur's son Sidney was a bit of a rat bag and often got up to mischief. He once took his younger brother Percy for a walk in the thick scrub on the other side of the road. Sidney pretended that he needed to relieve himself, but in actual fact walked back home leaving Percy behind. Percy was unable to find his way back home and when Arthur and Minnie questioned Sidney as to Percy's whereabouts, he eventually fessed up. Naturally, his parents weren't very impressed and he earned a flogging for his prank.

Snaring possums and wallabies was common practise back in the early 1900's. The skins from the animals were sold and the meat quite often became tea. Sidney and Percy often set up snares to catch possums and wallabies and they were doing quite well. Suddenly though, their luck changed and they weren't catching anything. Sidney soon cottoned onto what was going on and set up a trip wire at neck height to catch the perpetrator. He succeeded and the perpetrator turned out to be the neighbour. The neighbour wasn't too impressed with nearly being choked by a bit of wire and, so dobbed the boys into Arthur and Minnie who were also unimpressed. Poor Sidney got another flogging.

Minnie was heavily pregnant with the twins Harold and Charles in the winter time. Sidney came across some newly hatched chickens and figuring that they would get cold, caught them and popped them into a box. He then put the box into the oven of the wood fire, which was nearly out. Poor Minnie was unaware of this when she stoked the fire up the next day. She got the shock of her life when she went to cook something in the oven and discovered a box of cooked chickens in the oven. Apparently, this is what caused her to go into early labour. The twins were premature and only lived a few days. Harold and Charles are buried at Duck Lagoon between two magnificent red gums. There is a picnic table at this site and it is a lovely spot to sit and contemplate how awful it must have been for the whole family.

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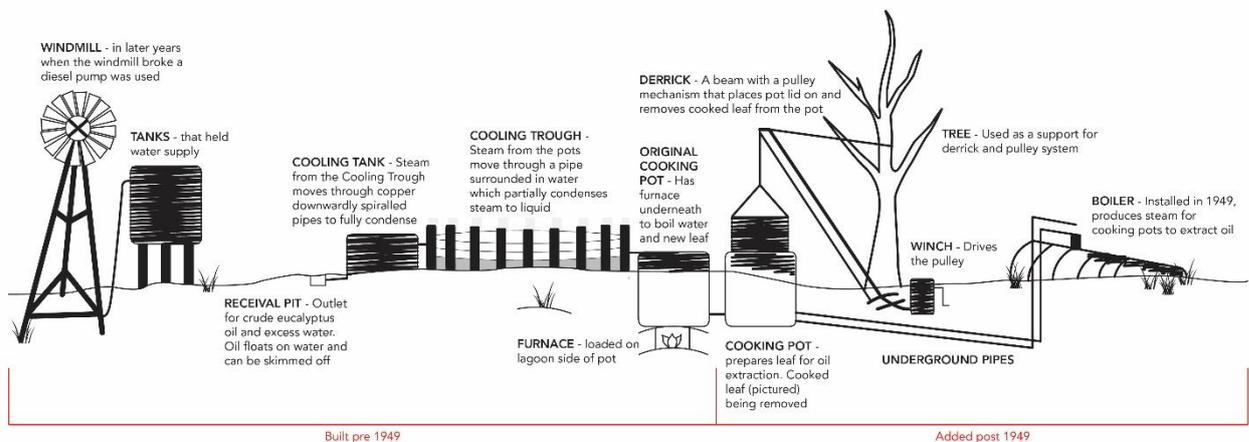
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The lagoon used to be full of water plants and the water was much fresher than it is now days. The lagoon used to teem with many different varieties of birds and ducks. There were also a lot of perch in the lagoon. Arthur's grandson, Bruce Weatherspoon tells stories of trying to catch these perch. He would herd the fish into a shallower part of the lagoon and then try and catch them. He succeeded one day and cooked some up. They didn't turn out to be as good as he had imagined though, as they were full of bones. One year there was a bad drought and the lagoon nearly dried up. Bruce tells of seeing lots of the perch dying in the small pools and says that he has never seen a perch in the lagoon since.

Bruce also tells the story of how one day a very young Percy was down by the edge of the lagoon with George. Percy crawled out on a log that was laying in the lagoon. He lost his balance and fell into the water. George didn't really know what to do, but amazingly Percy literally kept on crawling and crawled right out of the lagoon again!

THE DUCK LAGOON EUCALYPTUS STILL



Arthur built the first part of the still in the early 1900's. His son, Sidney then took over.

The leaf of the indigenous Kangaroo Island Narrow Leafed Mallee (*Eucalyptus cneorifolia*) is particularly rich in aromatic oils. The leaf was harvested by hand, using razor sharp sickles, and transported to the still site. Dec-Jan is the best time for getting the maximum amount of oil out of the eucalyptus leaves. However if a hot north wind blew it could reduce the oil content in the leaves by up to 50%.

The leaf was packed into the cooking pots. This involved laying in a good layer, then jumping down into the pot and jumping up and down on the leaf to compress it down, so that more could be fitted in there. The pot lid was lifted into place using a derrick crane and clamped down and sealed using either hessian bags soaked in water or with mud which was the more traditional method used in the early years of distilling. Then the furnace was lit beneath the pot, boiling the leaves for several hours. The steam produced ruptured the oil cells in the leaves and the oil vapour released was condensed into liquid by a system of cooling pipes. The oil and water separated on condensation in a receival pit. The crude eucalyptus oil, being lighter than water, was skimmed off and stored in drums for sale or further distilling. The average amount was around 50lb of oil. The leaves in the cooking pot were taken out and dried for stoking the furnace at a later date.

George Weatherspoon installed the boiler in 1949 to make the extraction process more efficient and easier. The boiler was retrieved from another still that had ceased to operate. Along with the boiler the second pot (the larger one) was installed. A series of underground pipes released steam from the boiler to the two pots. The condensing process began as the vapour moved in pipes first through a special cooling trough and then into a tank where the pipes were coiled. There was an outlet at the bottom of this tank where the crude oil was collected in barrels. The process proved more economical and additional leaf could be put in the pots and therefore more oil was produced with each firing.

Only crude oil was produced. This was stored in large barrels and then shipped to Adelaide to F.H. Faulding and Co where it was further refined and sold locally or exported to American, Japan, France and England.

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