

WOOD – WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD

HASS, Science, Technologies

How was the timber industry important to the development of Toodyay?

Students will:

- Understand the different ways that wood was used in the Avon Valley.
- Examine videos and historical photographs to develop a sense of empathy for the past.

ENGAGE

Show students images of [Sandalwood](#), [Wandoo](#) and [Jarrah](#) trees.

- Do you know what these trees are called?
- Have you seen them in your area?
- How are they similar/different?



EXPLORE

Divide students into three groups, and give each group one the historical photos attached. Ask students to study the photos closely and consider what they would see, hear and smell if they were present when the photo was taken.

EXPLAIN

The three photos relate to different ways that wood was used around Toodyay.

- Sandalwood contains fragrant oils. It was used for medicine and religious ceremonies. People from Asia paid very high prices for it, so it became a much needed source of income for Avon Valley's early European settlers – it even came to be known as 'wooden gold'. Since it brought in more money than wool or grain, it was sometimes poached (stolen) and some farmers stopped shearing and harvesting in order to cut it. Eventually, the government had to step in to create permits for how much Sandalwood could be sold, and set up special Sandalwood reserves – but by then, so much of the wood was chopped down that exporting it was no longer worth it.
- You can show students this [video about Sandalwood in WA](#).



- Jarrah timber is quite resistant to weather and to insects such as termites and marine toredo bugs. This makes it a useful material for building houses, railway sleepers, boats and furniture.
- The photo shows colonial furniture restorer, Tim Harris, repairing a Jarrah table from the 1870s. The timber appears to be pit sawn (ie. using hand saws) and was hand planed. Tim is restoring it using traditional hand tools. You can show students a video about [how wood is turned into lumber today](#), and how [wooden furniture was made in the past](#). Discuss how difficult working with wood must have been if only hand tools were available.



- Wandoo contains a substance called 'tannin' – the stuff that makes the Avon River brown. Tannin is used in [treating animal skins and turn them into leather](#).
- Between 1950 and 1971, the Industrial Extracts factory – note the name on the truck – turned Wandoo (and also Jarrah) logs to a black treacle-like substance that was used in tanning, binding and industrial drilling. The factory was located on the north side of the Toodyay-Northam Road, next to Nardie Cemetery. You can see some smoke and the factory chimneys in the background. The machines that powered the factory can now



be seen in the Connor's Mill museum, and are used to power the old flour milling machinery on display there.

EXTEND

Which photo is the oldest? How can you tell? (Sandalwood cart: c.1900, Industrial Extracts truck: 1950s,

Look at Google Maps to find the distance, and how long it would take, to travel from Toodyay to the port in Fremantle.

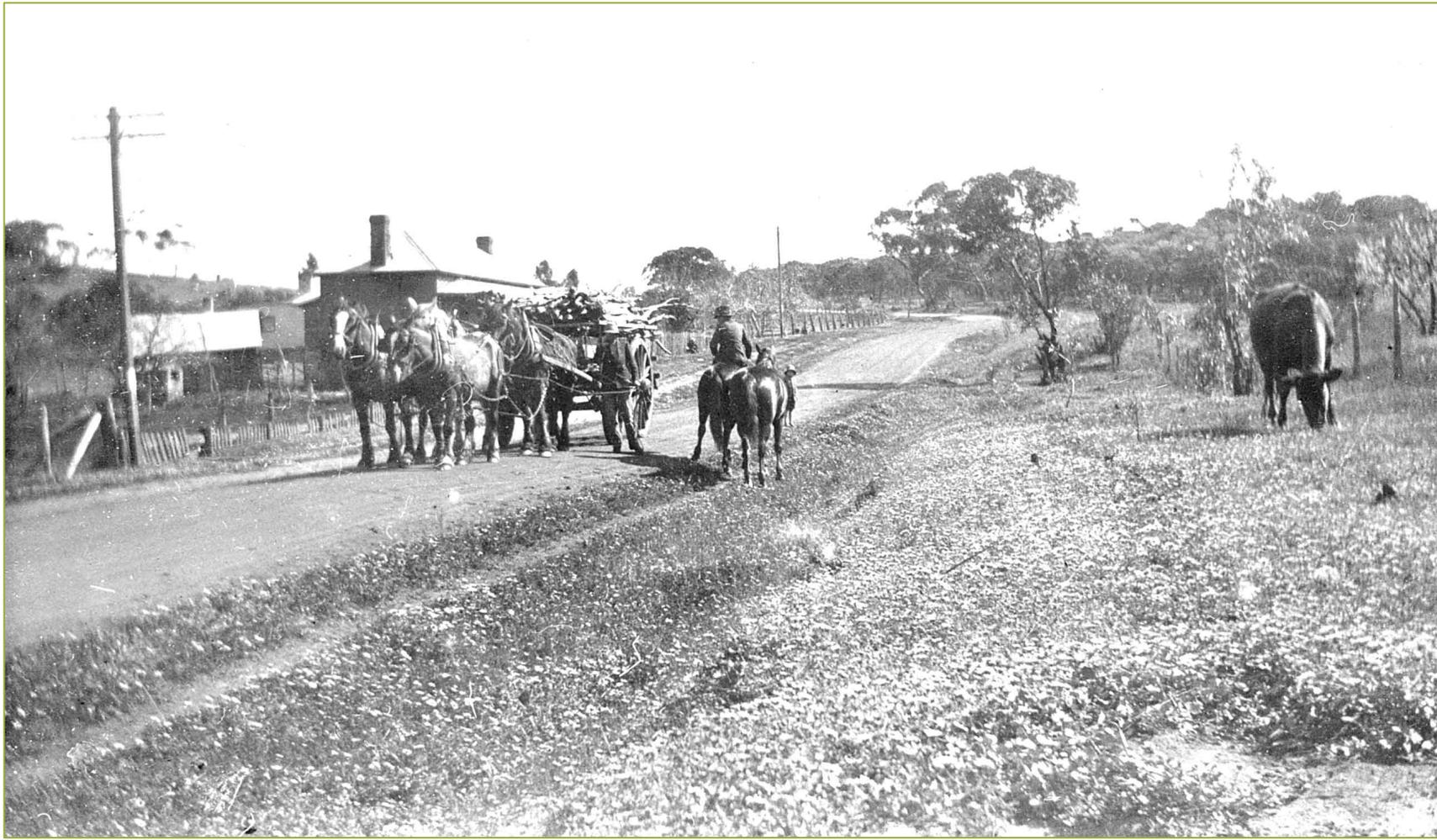
- How long it might have taken a wood-laden horse and cart to get there in the 19th century?
- What are some differences in transporting wood by horse and cart and by truck?

EVALUATE AND REFLECT

- Is wood still an important resource today? What do we use it for?
- Find some things made out of plastic today. Which of those items might have been made from wood in the past?

WANT TO DO MORE?

- Investigate use of trees – eg. Balga tree – by Aboriginal people.
- Explain that scarcity of materials meant that children often made their own toys and games out of wood and other plant materials. Give students some wooden blocks, bits of wood, bark, gum nuts, twigs and string and challenge them to make up a fun game using any or all of the items provided.
- Explore the properties of wood.
- Try some [simple woodworking activities](#).



Sandalwood carters. Possible site is Telegraph Road, Toodyay.

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.1287



Semi trailers loaded with Wandoo logs.

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 1999.12



'A Craftsman at Work' event at the Newcastle Gaol Museum, working on Jarrah furniture.

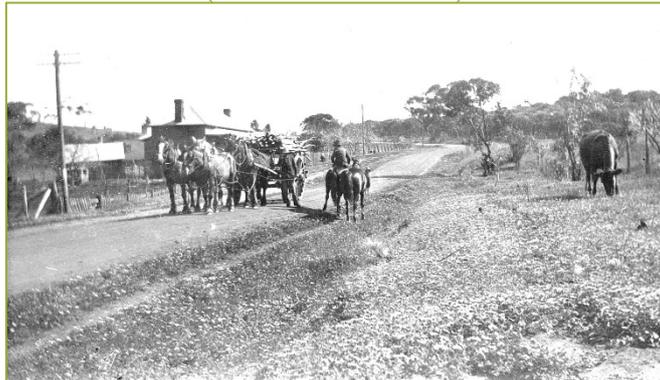
Margie Eberle



HEAR



THINK/ WONDER



HEAR



THINK/ WONDER



HEAR



THINK/ WONDER