

Francis Bird's grandson David Bird described one of the accidents at this site as follows:

...the team was not unhitched quickly enough on a downhill run and although they galloped there was no way that they could stay in front of the juggernaut and they were over-run and were thrown to the bottom of the rocky creek bed near the bridge ...

A memorial to this accident is located in a tree near the bridge.

To the right of this point, down to Munday Brook, were the wheatfields of Jabez White who pioneered the Orange Grove district in 1862. He operated an innovative water-powered flour mill on his property below the Bickley Dam in the 1870s and 1880s which was rendered unworkable when the Victoria Dam opened in 1891 and cut off the supply of water from Munday Brook.

7. Old Gardens

On the left, on the banks of Bickley Brook, are the remains of the old gardens where fruit and vegetables were grown to supply mill workers at the Hill Station. Some of the old fruit trees can still be seen.

8. Kaolin Pits

Clay was taken from these pits during the 1960s for the Orange Grove Brickworks. Pockets of this white clay appear throughout this area.

9. Site of Old Mill Town

It is probable that the rose nursery on the left is the site of the houses, school, hall and other amenities erected by mill workers. Many interesting items have been uncovered from this site.

Some of the mill workers remained in the town after the closure of the mill and the first to build privately owned homes in the Kalamunda area were John and Emma Wallis and Richard and Mary Weston, in 1883. A few hundred metres from here, along the track leading to the Victoria Reservoir, is the small grave of the Weston's first child, Francis. Both this grave and the Wallis home are featured on the **Cala Munnda Heritage Trail**, a 42km driving circuit highlighting the development of the

Kalamunda district. The Mason & Bird tramway is also featured on the **Kattamorda Heritage Trail**, a 27km walk trail through State Forest from Mundaring.

10. Site of Mason's Mill

Directly ahead, at the end of the trail, is the site that is believed to have been the location of Mason's second mill. It is now a privately owned orchard.

At one time the mill was a thriving concern, employing a total male workforce of 138 (1% of the male population of the state at the time), 40 horses and 80 bullocks. In 1876 it was reported that 'the timber yard at the Hill Station abounds with huge logs, and an average of 6 bullock teams are daily employed in hauling at the mill'. At the peak years of production the mill produced 20,000 feet of timber per day.

Due to the number of accidents on the tramway, and other transportation problems which made the deliveries unreliable, the business of Mason, Bird and Co. was forced into bankruptcy in 1882. When the new railway opened from Perth to Midland in 1881, timber was diverted there by dray and use of the tramway was discontinued.

Although the Mason and Bird enterprise failed it had helped to stimulate growth in the timber industry and for a time provided a valuable source of income for workers and assisted in boosting the value of Western Australia's exports.

Acknowledgements

The **Mason and Bird Heritage Trail** was developed by the City of Gosnells Historical Society which acknowledges and thanks the following:

- City of Gosnells
- Shire of Kalamunda
- Margaret Lefevre
- Riverton Library
- Russell Small - Bickley Youth Camp

Front cover: courtesy Riverton Library

Further Reading

Harper-Nelson, John (ed.)

A Line on Kalamunda (The Nine Club, 1978)

Hickson, David and Slee, John

The Mason and Bird Timber Company:

1862-1882 (Canning Districts Historical Society, 1978)

Slee, John

Cala Munnda: A Home in the Forest

(Shire of Kalamunda, 1979)

McNamara, F.J.

Kalamunda of the Dreamtime

(Paterson Brokensha, 1961)



W.A. Heritage Trails Network

A Bicentennial Project for
Community Participation

The **Mason & Bird Heritage Trail** is part of the Heritage Trails Network, a project for community participation devised by the Western Australian Heritage Committee. To commemorate the 1988 Bicentenary, the project established a statewide network of 'Heritage Trails' - routes designed to enhance awareness and enjoyment of Western Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

The Heritage Trails Network was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments under the Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Commemorative Program.

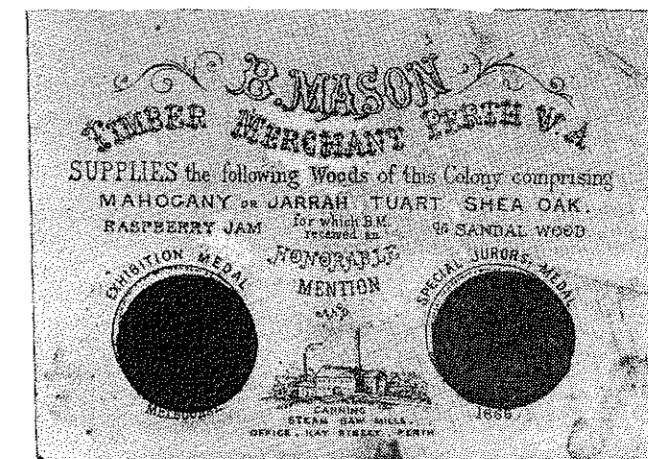
Further Information:

W.A. Heritage Committee (09) 322 4375



Mason & Bird Heritage Trail

Retracing One of Western
Australia's Oldest Timber Routes.



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A Commonwealth/State
Bicentennial Project

How To Get There

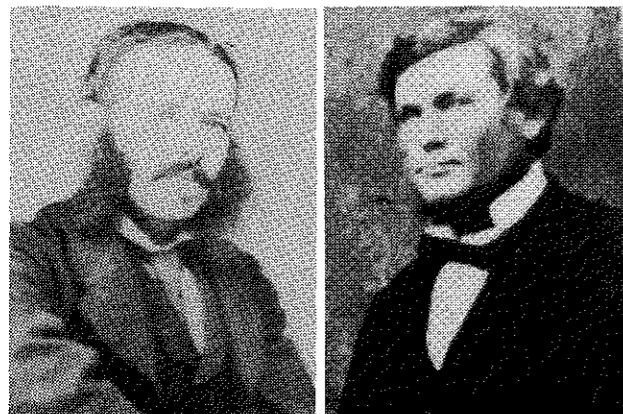
The **Mason & Bird Heritage Trail** commences opposite the gates of the Bickley Outdoor Recreation Centre, situated on the banks of Bickley Brook Reservoir (built in 1921) about 20km south-east of Perth on Hardinge Road (via Albany Highway and Maddington Road). Trail users are advised to park their cars at the picnic area west of the recreation centre.

The centre was officially opened as the Bickley Youth Camp in 1945 to promote healthy recreation for the youth of Australia.

The 4km (one-way) walk trail traces part of the route of the Mason & Bird Timber Company's tramway which linked its mill in Kalamunda with the jetty on the Canning River. Stopping points are marked by numbered posts which correspond to those in this brochure. At a leisurely pace, the trail will take about an hour to complete.

Please note:

- Persons using this Heritage Trail do so at their own risk.
- Since the trail does not return to its starting point, it is advisable to arrange transport at the other end if users do not wish to retrace their tracks.



Left: Francis Bird (courtesy Battye Library 5809B/2).

Right: Benjamin Mason, c. 1852 (courtesy Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society).

Introduction

In the early 1860s Benjamin Mason, a merchant of Perth, established a timber station on the Canning River at Mason's Landing (at the termination of Bickley Road, where River Road and Woodloes Street are today). Timber from the surrounding area was pit-sawn and then transported on flat-bottomed barges via the Canning and Swan rivers to Fremantle or Perth. Realizing the limited potential that the area held compared to the thick stands of jarrah available in the Darling Range, Mason applied for a licence to cut timber near Bickley Brook, in what is today the suburb of Carmel. Upon obtaining his permit in 1864 Mason built his second timber mill, the Hills Station (also known as Mason's Mill).

In 1870 Benjamin Mason took Francis Bird, a well-to-do young architect newly arrived from England, as a partner. Bird put some £25,000 into the business and is considered to have been the designer of the timber tramway which stretched from Mason's Landing to the Hills Station. The tramway closely followed the route mapped by Surveyor James Cowle in the 1860s, for a proposed railway to York.

The 14km track was built by convict labour and took seven months to complete, at an estimated cost of £300 per mile. The tramway was opened by Governor Weld on February 8th, 1872, and was the second railway to be opened in the State.

1. Mason & Bird Timber Tramway

The sharp bends noticeable along this section of the trail were part of the original tramway route designed to slow the carriages and prevent them from racing recklessly out of control. The general method for slowing carriages on the tramway was to pull a long lever attached to a blackboy heart, a tough and spongy material commonly used at that time as brakes on horse-drawn vehicles.

The three feet (0.9m) gauge tramway was made of jarrah rails cut five inches (13cm) square. These were deep set into grooves in the sleepers and held in place by wedges. The first 9km from the Canning River was over relatively flat ground, but then ascended

into the Darling Scarp. Three bridges were built - each over 30 metres in length. Only one of these remains (see Site 4).

The tramway was a relatively inefficient and dangerous means of transport, and many horses that pulled the trucks were killed on the dangerous curves and slopes. Valued at about £70 each, these horses represented the equivalent of a full year's wages for one labourer and therefore their deaths were an immense cost for the company.

2. Remains of the old Boy Scout Association Camp

These few buildings and timber sheds are all that remain of a former Boy Scouts' Camp.

3. Remains of the Boy's Brigade Camp

The foundations that remain here are thought to have supported a brick building that was used by the Boys' Brigade which was active here in the 1960s.

4. Munday Brook Bridge

This bridge was built in 1871 as part of the original Mason and Bird timber tramway. The jarrah decking has been replaced but the piles below are thought to be the original wandoo which supported the jarrah rails and sleepers over Munday Brook. Remains of the convict-built embankment and roadway leading to the bridge are still visible.

5. Victoria Reservoir

The track to the right is the old access road (now closed) to Perth's first major water supply, the Victoria Reservoir, which was built between 1889 and 1891.

6. Devil's Pinch

This steep hill was commonly known as the Devil's Pinch by teamsters who used to drive the timber-laden carriages down to Mason's Landing. At this point the team was unhitched for the downward run.

