

IMPORTANT INDUSTRY RE-ESTABLISHED

Thursday, 7th. March 1946 page 2

Tribute to Local Enterprise and Courage

After having been previously in operation for a period of 34 years, a disastrous fire on the evening of October 27, 1943, completely gutted the local Flour Mills established and controlled by Messrs F. Crago and Sons.

To-day a four-storey brick building has been re-erected on the site, and very latest milling machinery (all electrically driven) has been installed, and the mill is in full working order for the production of the famous "Wattle" flour and all by-products.

There was consternation and grave concern when, the mill was gutted, because it was the town's only secondary industry. It gave employment to quite a number of local people—directly and indirectly—it provided all the local requirements of flour and by-products "on the spot," and it was a great asset to farmers for many miles around who could always secure the best prevailing prices for their wheat, and back-load with flour and other products of the mills.

Immediately after the fire, the principals of Messrs F. Crago & Sons paid visits to West Wyalong and gave earnest consideration to the question of re-establishing the mills, but their final decision was in the negative. Nevertheless, there was a strong agitation, particularly from the farming community, for the continuance of mills in this district.

It is due to the courage and enterprise of a local syndicate, headed by Mr. J. J. Duff, of West Wyalong, that the most modern flour mill in New South Wales has been re-established here, and is a going concern.

Mr. Duff was for 18 years Shire Engineer to the Bland Shire Council, and prior to his appointment he was for six years practising as a licensed surveyor in this district.

Many thousands of pounds have been expended in the re-establishment of the mills, for which the local syndicate deserves great credit, and it is sincerely to be hoped that their enterprise and faith in the town and district will be fittingly rewarded.

An "Advocate" representative paid a visit to the mills and it was a delight to see such a splendid building, with a mass of the most modern machinery in full-operation. The grain sheds and silos were not destroyed by the fire, and now contain a large quantity of specially selected wheat for gristing. A start has been made with the gristing of a large order of flour for export, but local requirements are, also being supplied. The flour is being sold under the old and regular trade name of "Wattle," which meet and other backers say is unsurpassed for quality.

The former motive power provided by a steam engine has been superseded by electricity supplied by the Bland Shire Council from Burrenjuck. Everything is electrically driven, and there are numerous electric motors, ranging from 2 horse power to the huge 75 h.p. motor which drives the mill and the 50 horse power motor which drives the wheat cleaning apparatus. It is surprising to find such a mass of machinery for the cleaning of wheat, and the number of processes through which it passes before reaching the finished product of finest quality flour, but nothing is "left to chance," and the public are assured that they get completely wholesome flour for their daily bread.

A detailed description of the new machinery installed is not practicable suffice to say that it is the very latest and most hygienic that the world has to offer. The installation of the milling machinery was carried out by Messrs Thomas Robinson and Son, milling engineers, of Sydney (and of Rochdale, England). In addition to the beautiful machinery, which was imported from

England, the firm's mill-wrights carried out some excellent joinery work on the premises, including thousands of feet of square spouting made with yellow pine. The re-building of the premises was carried out under the supervision of Mr. Les Carr, building contractor, of West Wyalong, and the electrical installation was carried out by the Bland Shire Council under the supervision of their Electrical Engineer, Mr. B. A. Beckwith. Special lighting has been installed to provide against the danger of fire through combustion.

Mr. Duff pays a warm tribute to all who were engaged in re-erecting the mill, and the installation of the machinery and electricity, and he also expresses his gratitude to Messrs F. Crago and Sons for the advice and assistance he received from them in connection with various phases of the enterprise.

Most of the former staff have been re-engaged. Mr. H. A. Kaye, who was manager for Messrs F. Crago & Sons for 30 years, is again in that position. Mr. Fred Linquist, who was formerly with Crago's for 25 years, is the principal shift miller, and his son Bruce, who was also with the firm from the time he left school, is the other shift miller. Mr. Charles Ashton, junr., who was recently discharged from the AIF, is being trained as miller to take charge of the third shift when it is started in the near future. Mr. Harry Gillard (former engine driver). Mr. Hugh Sturgeon, and Miss Hazel Meier (clerk) are again on the staff, and a number of ex-Service men are employed and are being trained for various jobs. The mill is at present working two shifts, but it is hoped to commence the third shift in the very near future.

Information from Frank & Yvonne Ashton:

Jim Duff – Owner: Mill driven by all electric motors.

Graham Duff – Miller, Mr. Harry Kaye – Manager.

Graham McGregor – Office Clerk, George Hudson – Paymaster, Jock Mitchell – Loader/Stacker/Caretaker (longest employee), Harry Gillard – Miller, Chris Read -Miller, Roy Cross – Miller/Packer, Fred Lindquist – Head Miller, Charlie Ashton – Miller, Ken Steele – Packer, Bruce Lindquist – Packer, Frank Ashton – Packer (7years), John Ashton – Stacker/Handyman, Bruce Herridge – Loader/Storeman, Bruce Potts – Handyman, “Slim” Hately - Cleaner and his brother ? Hately – Stacker, Charlie Redman - Bag Cleaner, his son Stacey Redman – Stacker/Storeman, Eric James – Cleaner (top man 3 years), an Aboriginal man?

Three Shifts to fill overseas orders to Bangkok, Rangoon. Java. Full Train loads 50 bags 140lb flour.

Supplied local bakers: Taits, Frasers and Sandersons (Athol).

The West Wyalong Advocate <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article185755279>