

"SCRUB ROLLER"

A rare piece of land clearing history from your Wylie Museum. Donated by Vern and belonging to Percy Witney, this 1924 "Scrub Roller" was made from bush timber and a ships boiler. A testament to our settlers 'Can Do' attitude and ability to improvise!

This one was matched up to his Two Ton "Holt" / "Caterpillar" Tractor which he purchased for the job. While wheeled tractors were used in some areas, they were not very efficient in soft country and prior to tracked machines they were usually drawn by a team of 10-16 Bullocks (sometimes horses but these were deemed too valuable by most farmers for the treacherous task which was dangerous for both man and beast). A good team could clear 20 acres a day. Percy contracted out to clear thousands of acres south of Wylie and locals continued to use the roller (below) in later years.

The Scrub or Mallee Roller was drawn into a circular direction, both clockwise or anti-clockwise and was offset from the bullock team or tractor so that it was clearing the area outside of the tractor route. Good for lighter country but sometimes requiring some "Grubbing" of larger mallee's before rolling. These rollers laid the scrub in an overlapping, circular pattern to be burnt once it had dried out. The overlapping of rolled scrub, burnt far more effectively than just felling scrub.

Although the areas to be burned were surrounded by cleared firebreaks, escaping fires were a common occurrence on days with hot northerly winds. A large amount of manual work was involved in picking up stumps turned up by agricultural implements. A considerable amount of labour was also involved in removing stumps from the field or burning them in heaps.

The scrub (or mallee) roller still left stumps in the ground which made ploughing difficult, until the stump-jump plough was brought into use. In 1876 a local agricultural implement maker, Richard Bowyer Smith, exhibited his 'Vixen' three-furrow stump-jump plough. When one of the mouldboards on this plough hit a stump or root, its levers allowed it to rise out of the ground and pass over the obstruction, thus enabling partially cleared land to be cultivated successfully.

1911 Homemade Scrub Roller



Est 1981

WYALKATCHEM



CBH AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM