

Harness and saddlery

Australia had an extremely high standard of saddlery and harness (and still does with the few remaining in this wonderful trade). Once, these places were tremendous employers too, and they were extremely good - it was such a competitive business. They also sold tools and leather for people making or repairing their own harness and saddlery.



Men working on horse collars, 1885. State Library SA



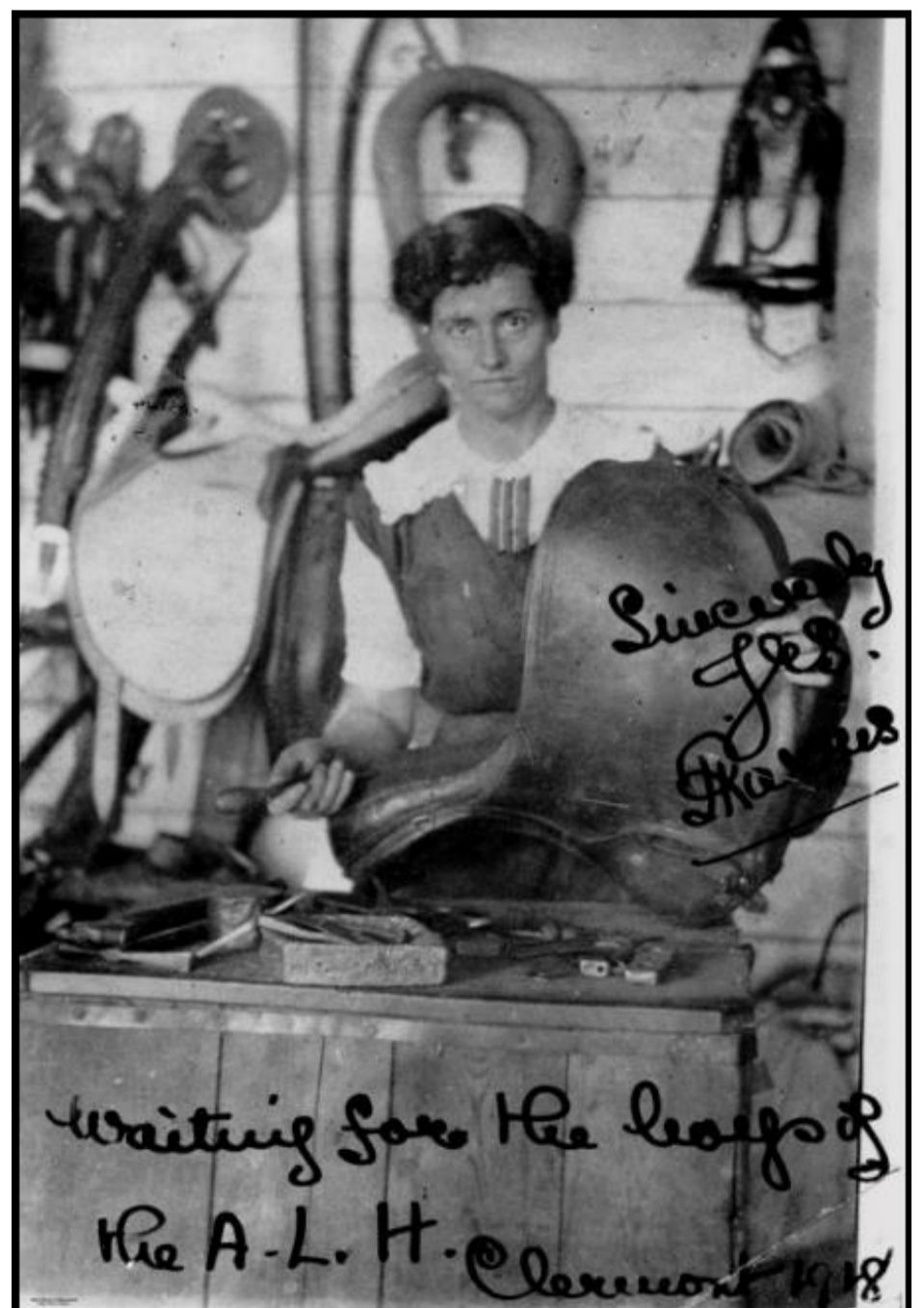
Thomas Bishop's Saddlery in Commercial Street, Mount Gambier. 1910. State Library SA



McNamara's Saddlery, Mount Gambier, 1908. State Library SA

Harris Saddlery, Clermont, 1918. State Library Qld

Rose, the only woman saddler in Australia at the time, is working on a saddle at William T. Harris's Saddlery at Clermont. Various tools appear in the photograph. The words 'Waiting for the Boys of the A.L.H., Clermont, 1918' are inscribed on the original. A.L.H. presumably refers to the Australian Light Horse during World War I. During the 1916 Clermont floods, Rose saved people from the floods by tying leather reins together and pulling people onto the hotel balcony.



Miss Rose Harris worked in her father's saddlery and later ran it herself. She was a toughie and had been a very good boxer, taking on local lads. During the 1916 floods she made lassos from reins and saved many lives - from the roof of the two storey saddlery. She also swam in the flood to save many. A Chinese man also on the roof, swam out and saved nine people, but he died trying to save a 10th. In 1938 a fire in the building destroyed almost everything. Rose was called *The Rose of Clermont* and popular locally. She was a wonderful organist at the local church and played for well over 1,000 weddings. A great rider, she won countless blue ribbons in hack classes. Also a tremendous swimmer and tennis player! After her business burned down, Rose cheerfully decided to retire and play golf. What a woman!

Arundel & Co was a giant saddlery and harness business in Perth, WA. Sunday Times, 13th October 1912



MESARS E. ARUNDEL AND CO'S DISPLAY OF SADDLERY AND HARNESS

Western Mail, 14th October, 1926

Edward Arundel's Saddle and Harness Factory Opposite Boan Bros., Murray-street, Perth



SHOWROOMS, OFFICES, ETC., ETC.

Transport

When you think every car and truck was a horse drawn vehicle once, we had a lot. Best of all, built here. We did import some coaches from the USA and the UK but soon built them here too. Carriage building workshops abounded, they also did repairs - broken wheels and axles were a common repair. Wheelwrights were highly regarded; many carriage builders were multi-skilled.

These businesses employed many people. Often there was a smithy and some premises made and sold harness too. Some also ran a carrier business. A sort of one-stop horse and vehicle shop. People liked to hang out at these places while buying or waiting for repairs, a good place for meeting old and new friends, exchanging knowledge and keeping up with fashion in vehicle design. Some places managed to morph into motor-car, motor-cycle, motor-coach and truck building when times changed.

Most blacksmiths were also wheelwrights; all part of the trade. Some painters and decorators also did beautiful coach painting - one of our iconic Australia artists, Frederick McCubbin, learned his trade being apprenticed to a coach painter. It is surprising how many coach builders, smiths and wheelwrights joined the Light horse in WW1 too.



National Museum of Australia

Western Mail, 16th Sept 1948

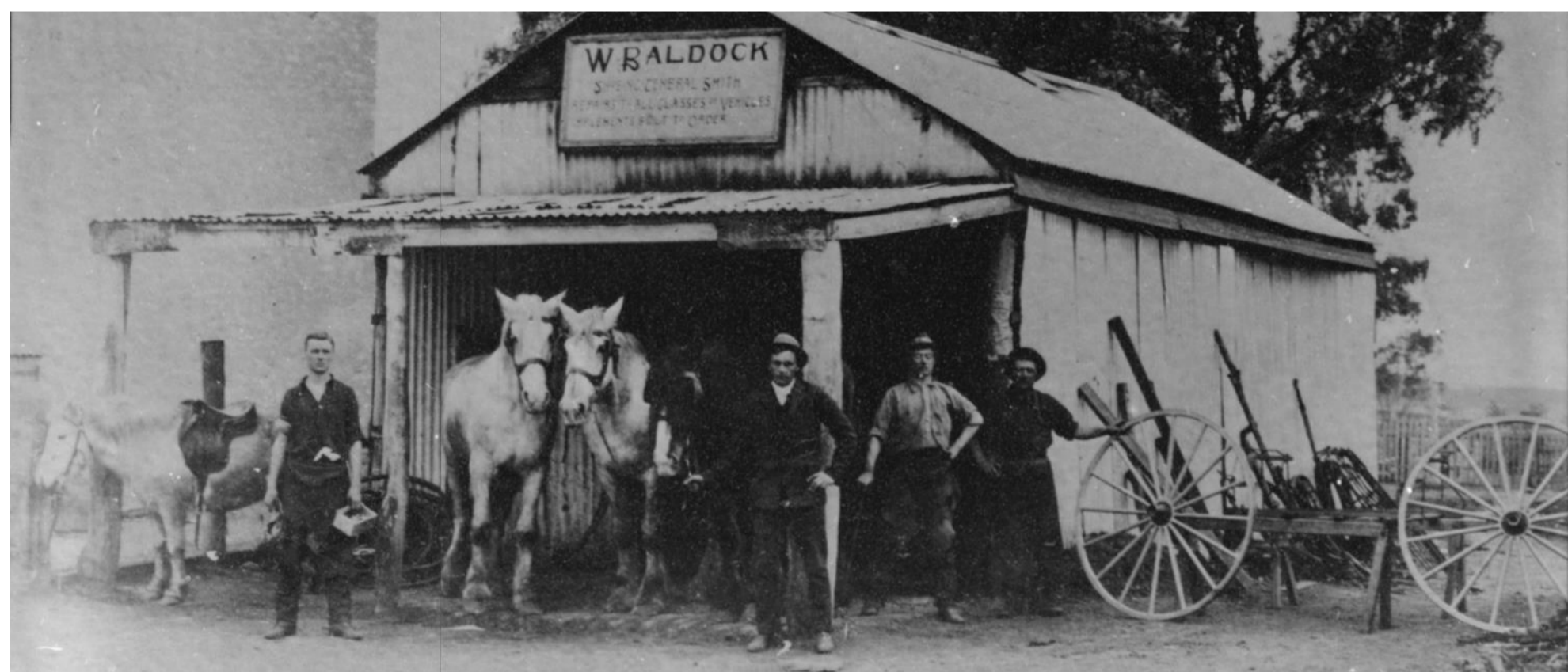
From Saddlery to Cars

THE new Australian car, which is expected to be produced at the rate of 20,000 a year next year, virtually had its beginnings in a saddlery business in Adelaide sixty years ago. An enterprising saddler named Henry Holden, in partnership with a man named



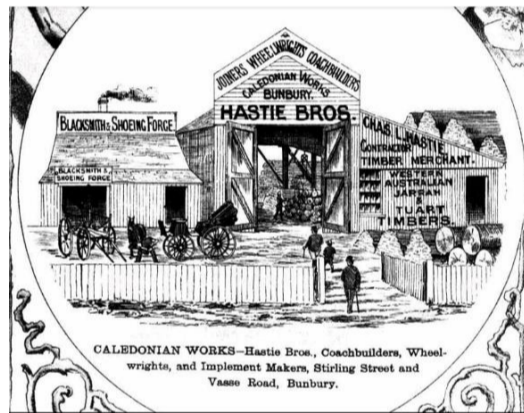
The late Sir Edward Holden.

Frost, set up business as a coachbuilder in Grenfell-street, and outside his premises he set up a life-sized white horse that became an Adelaide landmark. The business prospered and by the time his son Edward came into it in 1902, there were 120 workers. From coach-building the firm turned with the years to building motor bodies, first one or two at a time, and



A grandson of William Baldock recalls (in 2010): 'I grew up in the later blacksmith shop located to the rear of these premises on Hall Crescent, Old Noarlunga. William Baldock was a blacksmith (one of the few who mastered the art of forge hand welding dissimilar iron compounds), a coach builder, vehicles, ploughs etc, mining implements and farrier work. This photo was taken at grandad's blacksmith shop on Patapinda Road, Old Noarlunga, SA. The shop was located opposite the Old Noarlunga Hotel which was known as the 'Jolly Miller'. Without looking at the actual print, I would say that this item is from the original FIDGE collection, c 1915. William Baldock is the guy at far right, I think the man next to him is possibly his second eldest son George, the chap with the horses is most likely Roy Cliff or one of his sons, the man on the left is the eldest son John (known as Jack). The stone wall to the left was the family store of the Rehn family when I was a nipper, in fact their delivery van took my Mum, (who still lives in Old Noarlunga) to South Glen hospital for my delivery.' Photo is dated c1880, State Library, SA.

Royal Mail Coach. Painting by Arthur Esam (1850-1934), Australian artist



Firrell's Coach Builders premises in Beechmont, Queensland. State Library Qld