

## ENVIRONMENT

## 'Bridge of Terror' marks long history of Julimar Forest beekeeping

**Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance**

Beth Frayne\*

TOODYAY'S Julimar State Forest has a long history of beekeeping and is currently home to about 38 State-registered hive sites.

The forest is full of colourful hive site names, including 'Bridge of Terror', 'Toogeemon' and 'Munyerring'.

A beekeeping neighbour said recently that the forest is now favoured by Bakers Hill beekeepers rather than those from Toodyay, and a Mundaring producer advertises that it too gets its wandoo honey from Julimar.

Beekeeping for honey has long been associated with Julimar, no doubt due to the flavours imparted by the abundant blossoms of the banksia (formerly dryandra) shrub species and Wandoo trees.

Historical records show that in 1897, cousins Charles and Arthur Cook arrived at Fremantle from Smithfield in NSW and initially helped the Smith brothers with beekeeping at Chidlows Well before settling on their own Toodyay properties.

Arthur Cook bought a block in the new Coondle Estate after it was subdivided in 1898, established an apiary and orchard, and took up mixed farming.

His younger brother Samuel left NSW and joined him around 1900.

Their local presence was indicated by Arthur's Leghorn chickens winning prizes at the Toodyay Show.

Arthur and Samuel both won prizes for their chickens in 1902, and Arthur was also successful with his honey.

Samuel selected his own block of virgin forest five kilometres west of Coondle Siding in 1903.

By 1907, the brothers had established more than 400 hives in Coondle and Hoddys Well – more than any other apiarist in WA.

The brothers used horse-drawn carts to create and name roads that still wend their way through the Julimar State Forest.

There were no registered sites in those days, and each beekeeper respected the other's territory.

Samuel Cook's five sons, all of whom became

apiarists in the 1930s and 1940s, worked alongside their pioneering father until his death in 1942.

The sons continued to manage Julimar Forest bee sites until about 20 years ago.

A descendant of their father notes the colourful names for forest hive sites.

They include Munyerring on Julimar Brook, Toogeemon, Nockiron, Windmill (Biggs Road), Walkabout, Kangaroo Gully (off Whittaker Road), Toogee Brook (off Brook Road), Morleys, The Junction (the road to the O'Meaghers), Bridge of Terror, Stony Ridge, Sand Gully (where patches of Morrison (*Verticordia nitens*) flowered in late spring), Trigg Point (off Trigg Road), Veters (named after the French family who owned a Coondle Estate winery and also had a forest bush camp), Mortimer Road (with a forestry hut) and Gackling Road – the list goes on.

"Memories of our family picnics in the forest where Cook's Road crossed the Julimar Brook still remain," she said.

"When full, the brook was truly a child's delight as we followed the sound of the gurgling water as it meandered through the forest.

"Then when finding our way back to the picnic food or when we paddled barefoot across the roadway crossing, balancing on the rocks, someone always fell in.

"It was such a wonderful nature playground."

By the mid-1930s, Julimar and its surrounds were not productive enough to supply increased demand for honey.

Blossoming periods were not a regular annual occurrence across all the local nectar producing species in the Julimar Forest.

As a result, Toodyay beekeepers began annual migrations south to chase Karri and other eucalypt blossoms in other areas.

Beekeeping was a tough life in the bush, living in tents at first and later in caravans.

For more information about the alliance, visit its website at [julimarcafa.org.au](http://julimarcafa.org.au), email: [julimarforest@gmail.com](mailto:julimarforest@gmail.com) or see the alliance's Facebook group page.

\*Beth Frayne is the Toodyay Historical Society's delegate to the Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance.



Beekeeping pioneer Arthur Cook's Coondle home apiary in 1905, from *Beekeeping in Western Australia* by R. S. Coleman, WA Department of Agriculture Journal 1956.