

# Our Local Bushman and Environmentalist

The story of Clifford James Hill



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Harding-Davies and Kelly Davidson

Mathoura Public School





Enviro-Stories is an environmental education program that has been developed by PeeKdesigns.



**[www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)**

This program provides an education and learning experience for kids through their active engagement with natural resource and catchment management issues. The final product is a published story written about local issues, by local kids, for local kids and future generations.

# Our Local Bushman and Environmentalist

## The story of Clifford James Hill

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### “Biodiversity of the Murray Catchment” Enviro-Stories Education Program

In 2012, the Creative Catchment Kids program delivered the “Biodiversity of the Murray Catchment” Enviro-Stories Education Program. The project was initiated by the Murray Darling Association and Burrumbuttock Public School. It was generously funded by the Murray and Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authorities, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and Teys Australia, Wagga. Additional support came from the Wirraminna and Riverina Environmental Education Centres.



Catchment Management  
Authority  
Murray



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



Catchment Management  
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Murrumbidgee



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This story tells the tale of a local identity in our country town of Mathoura, in Southern NSW. Born in the 1930's, Clifford James Hill, otherwise known by locals as "Cliff" or "Red gum" has had a very interesting and inspiring life.



From family history, to his birth, to working in the mid 1900's in Mathoura the story offers insight as to how fellows such as himself have contributed to the growth of our local environment and industries.

Using interesting equipment and encountering unique wildlife, Cliff's love for our town and bush is evident in how he has assisted to keep our environment growing, sustainable and as thriving as it is today.

# Home Sweet Home

Cliff's parents, Mary Allen and Alfred Hill married on 5th of July 1916. They had a very large family of 13 children, and such a large family requires enough housing to accommodate them all... and what better than to buy a circus tent to live in!

In the 1930's, before Cliff was born, Burton's Circus performed in Mathoura. Later they fell broke and so Mary and Alfred Hill bought the tent as their home residing in it for a few years with Cliff's older sisters.

Cliff tells us that the circus performers ended up working in the bush with their elephants. The elephants were often seen picking up Red gum logs with their trunks.



# The birth of a bush man

On the 7th July, 1934 Clifford, Raymond and (an unnamed baby boy) were born as triplets at Bendigo Base Hospital.

Unfortunately the unnamed boy died during birth, but the other two healthy babies survived not only the traumatic birth, but also another scare that happened that night.

Cliff tells us, “A crazy man who had a set on the doctor tried to blow the hospital up.” Luckily there was only a small fire, everyone was safe and so, Clifford James Hill began his life journey.



# Growing up

Cliff spent most of his time growing up with his brother Ray. From kids, they formed a strong brotherly bond, a bond that has remained consistent throughout their lives.

They grew up in Marong and attended Marong Primary School and then Bendigo Technical College for 3 years.

By the time he was 13, Cliff had to leave school to make money to support the family by shearing sheep and cutting Red gum piles. He camped out often in the Perricoota and Weiri bush.

*Right: Marong, Victoria*

*Below: Mathoura, New South Wales*



# Marriage and Family

Through his love of the bush, Cliff met the love of his life. In 1963 he married a beautiful lady who worked in the office of State Forests NSW.

Juanita Agnes Orth and Clifford Hill later had three daughters - Simone, Marisa and Raquel, respectively.

Although Cliff very sadly lost his wife in 2010, he still has his daughters close by and three grandchildren - Jesse, Ines and Jonah.



*L-R: Raquel, Marisa, Juanita and Simone.*



## Working in the Millewa Forest

With so much family to support, Cliff had to work very hard. He started cutting River Red gums in our area in 1948 with his brothers and father. His father told him...

There were much fewer trees in the bush when he was younger. You could see the Edwards Bridge from town. You could even see paddle steamers going down the river, the land was that clear.

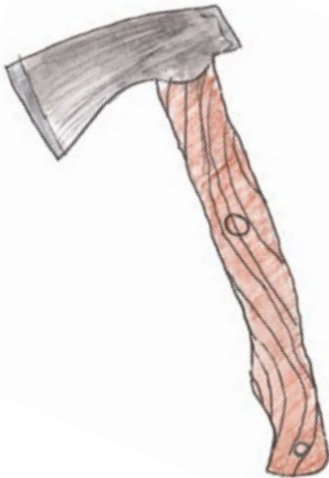
Cliff believes that the selective harvesting of the local forest assisted to promote the growth of the Red gums and rich environment that it is today.



# Equipment

These pictures display the previous technologies used in the bush over the years.

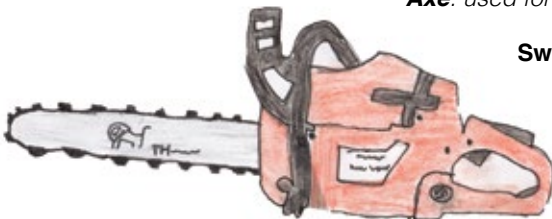
It is hard to believe, with our modern machines today, that timber cutters were using such time consuming technologies as Cliff was.



**Cross Cutting Handsaw:** one person would push or pull each side to fall a tree. (top)

**Axe:** used for cutting a scarf into a tree. (above left)

**Swing Saw:** two rotating saw wheels that required pushing with a small motor for the blade. (above)



**Chainsaw:** a more modern invention that Cliff used in his later years in the bush. (left)

# Red gum as a renewable resource

From 1948 to 2010, Cliff worked in the Mathoura Forest. With his brother Ray, and the use of the different equipment, they have spent countless hours together to supply our local community and surrounding district with wood. Some examples of how the wood is used can be seen in the pictures below.

Cliff claims that Red gum is a natural, renewable resource. His work in the bush has helped to keep our local environment sustainable by cleaning up firewood that is lying around to prevent bushfires and by thinning out old trees to promote newer and better trees to grow.

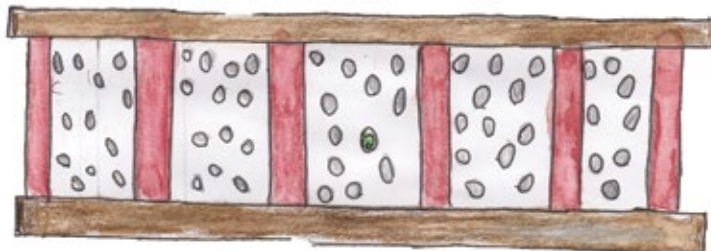


Charcoal



Outdoor setting

Railway  
timber



*The beautiful distinct 'red' coloured timber is manufactured and sold for furniture, firewood, charcoal, sleepers, garden mulch and many more things. None of the tree is wasted as each part is used for a different purpose.*

# Interesting Animal Encounters

During the many years in the forest, Cliff has sighted many unique and rare animals.

Although he cut down trees for many years, he never touched the habitat trees. These, by law were marked with a capital 'H' and left to grow and house its occupants.

The following pages display our illustrations of the rare animals Cliff has seen in the Millewa Forest.



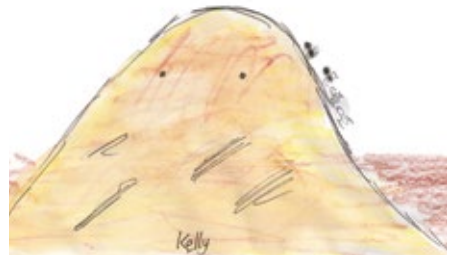
**Albino kangaroo**  
*Sighted at Gulpa Island  
near the sand hills*



**White-breasted sea eagles**  
*A pair of them were seen around  
Cumalong near the Edward River.*



**Black wallabies**  
*A whole colony were found near Taylors  
Bridge in a thick patch of wild cherry.*



**Bull ant mounds**  
*Found near Tin Hut Road building  
pyramids over 50cm high*

# Now and the future

Cliff has always had a general talent in installing TV's. Somehow, he just became the local TV man! Cliff is the first to call if we have problems with our televisions.

Since the forest turned into a National Park in 2010, Cliff now works around the town installing and repairing televisions.

In his spare time, he enjoys spending time with family and friends and catching up with locals at the pub on a Friday night.

Along with Ray, Cliff has appeared in many different media articles such as The Age, Landline and The Telegraph. He was also nominated for the Murray Shire Australian of the Year by locals in 2011.





We thank Cliff for his fascinating stories,  
time, photographs and resources and  
mostly, for giving such insight into the history  
of our local community and environment.





Ellie Strong, Tye Haywood, Sophie Harding-Davies  
and Kelly Davidson with Cliff Hill

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