

The Boyer Mill

**Newsprint from Eucalypt
- an Australian Story**



THE BOYER STORY
innovation - engineering - science

NEWSPRINT MAKER TO THE NATION SINCE 1941

Pioneering Achievement

Australia suffered severe shortages of imported newsprint during World War 1. We needed our own paper mills sourcing local timbers, but overseas experts said that Australian hardwoods were unsuitable.

Nevertheless, the Commonwealth Government initiated research in 1918 and, thanks to the persistence and vision of two chemists in particular, a pilot plant was established in 1927 at Kermandie in the Huon Valley.

The pioneering chemists were Mr Lou Benjamin (who later became General Supt of Australian Newsprint Mills 1938-1956) and Mr John Somerville (Chief Chemist 1938-1965)

Encouraging results led to larger scale trials in North America during 1934 and the success of this work gave sufficient confidence for local newsprint publishers to come together and form Australian Newsprint

Mills Limited (ANM) with capital of £1,327,254. In 1935 the Tasmania Parliament gave the company long term rights over the forest assets of the Upper Derwent Valley.



L R Benjamin



J L Somerville



Kermandie Pilot Plant

Building of the Mill 1939-41

The mill offered advantages for access to much needed power and water, and close proximity to the forests, transport by rail, road and sea and other vital infrastructure.

The original process in-

involved grinding timber billets, bleaching, adding softwood pulp and making paper.

Mr Percy Sandwell, a Canadian Engineer, was the lead designer and supervised the construction

of the mill.

The company started with a mill of 100 tons/day capacity with intention of proceeding as soon as possible to 400 tons/day.

Everything in the first plant was designed for the ultimate configuration. 65% of the plant and equipment of the mill was made in Australia. The rest, in order of quantity, came from Great Britain,

USA and Canada. The first newsprint was produced on 22nd February 1941, just in time to avert a critical shortage of newsprint in Australia during World War 2.

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of the mill.



Boyer Mill Circa 1941

All images courtesy of the Boyer archives.

The Boyer Story

The commercial production of quality newsprint from hardwood was a great technical achievement. It led to the establishment of a Mill that has the proud record of being a successful Australian enterprise, able to produce newsprint at world prices without tariff protection or bounty.

Successive generations of Boyer employees have guided the Mill's development with the same persistent endeavour and cooperative contribution that

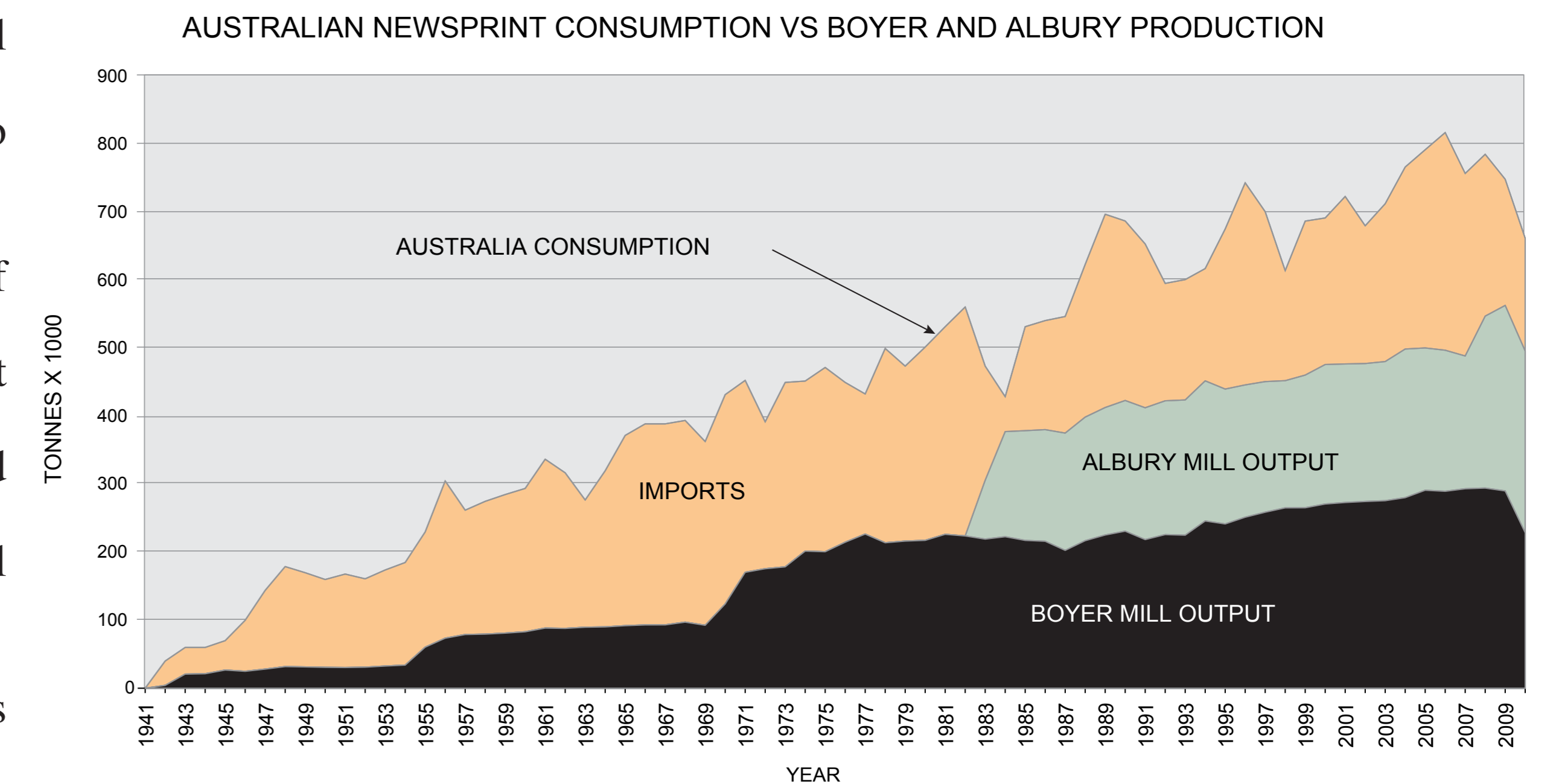
was displayed for its formation.

Fundamental to its longevity has been a culture of building value through innovation, engineering

and science, having regard for a sustainable use of resources and developing beneficial long term relationships with customers and the community.

Milestones in Development

- 1946 Newsprint transported to Hobart by barge until 1986.
- 1950 No 3 Boiler; 1962 No 4 Boiler, each modified to burn low grade, high ash Tasmanian coal
- 1952 Second paper machine and new wood mill
- 1957 New pulping process using the impregnation of wood chips with caustic soda
- 1969 Third paper machine, with expansion of support services. Mill output 200,000 tons per annum.
- 1977 Softwood thermo-mechanical pulp mill (world first).
- 1985 Output 220,000 tonnes per annum; 1465 full time employees.
- 1988 Effluent treatment primary clarification
- 1989 No 5 Boiler; 1996 Newsprint to northern ports by rail.



Community & the Mill The Modern Mill

The semi-rural location of the Mill and the isolation of its forests made it necessary for the company to provide homes for a high proportion of its employees. 325 homes were constructed adjacent to the old town of New Norfolk and 119 in Maydena. Recreational and sporting facilities were provided.

A company fund provided sickness, accident, pharmaceutical and dental benefits, and educational funds gave additional family support.

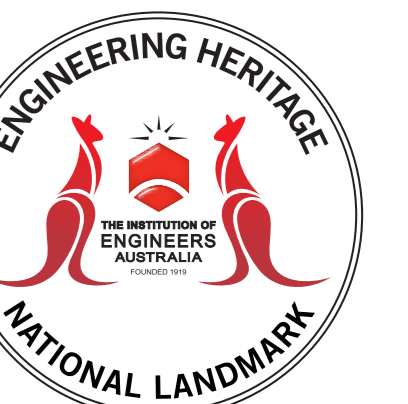
These were community services in which the employer and employee had cooperative interest.

In the 1980s the focus for future major expansion was directed to an entirely new facility at Albury.

The Boyer priority was to achieve improved product quality, diversity and customer service. The aim was lower cost, simpler processes and asset efficiency, together with improved safety and environmental performance.

As a result the Mill's production rose to 300,000 tonnes per annum, using only two modernised paper machines and less than 400 full time employees.

In 2010, responding to the global newsprint market and community expectations, the Mill moved away from its inaugural eucalypt hardwood base to lower cost and enhanced environmental aspects of softwood plantation fibre.



This award by Engineering Heritage Australia recognises that the Boyer Mill has a history which is of national significance to the people of Australia
November 2010

For more information on this and other engineering heritage works, go to www.engineersaustralia.org.au/heritageregister/search

