



▲ *Felling jarrah around the turn of the century.*



## The Remarkable Whim

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The whim, or more correctly whimwham-arch, seems to have been introduced into the karri forests very soon after sawmilling began, in the mid-1800s. Almost certainly, initial sawmilling took place at the stump, using saw-pits of which the Brockman saw-pit, in the Pemberton area, is an example. Similar pits were dug in King's Park after 1829, for the sawing of jarrah.

With the establishment of saw-mills in the southern forests, huge karri logs had to be moved from their stump to the mill and steam hauling became established. Not all sawmillers were large enough to afford steam haulers and their associated railways, and not all steam haulers could reach all of the cutting concession, hence the introduction of the whim.

An ingenious device, the whim was able to lift huge karri logs clear of the ground and then move them with the aid of a bullock or horse

team, to landings. From here they could be hauled by horse drawn jinkers and rail to the mill.

Using a whim required team work and the operation to retrieve a log went something like this:

**The fallers**, generally working in pairs, would erect their scaffold around the butt of a tree—the alternative method of tree pegging was simpler and quicker and used in the smaller jarrah and wandoos forests. A scarf was axe cut and the tree backed down using cross-cut saw

▲ *Cross-cutting karri log (working up from the stump end) ready for snigging to log landing.*

and long wedges. These fallers usually carried a set of saws ranging from 1.5 to 2.7 m in length.

Once on the ground a tree would be de-limbed, crowned and cut into lengths.

Each length would then be dragged into an accessible position, "broken out" and a whim would be hauled backwards over it by a bullock team.

During this part of the operation the **bullocky** came into his own with an ever widening vocabulary.

**The swamper's** job involved judging a point on each log that was just behind centre so that a slung log would be slightly "heavy on". He would spoon a hole under the log and sling the "belly chain" around



▲ To load the log, some of the horses were used to drag the whim backwards over the log.

▼ The log winched up into the whim. Note how the leading end of the log acts as a brake on the ground when the team is stationary.





▲ Bullock-drawn whim and karri logs.

▼ Horse team in action. Note the leading right-hand horse shying away from the apparently irate team driver who is about to throw a stick or rock at them.





▲ *One of a number of methods of snigging logs which were tried during the early days.*

▼ *Crawler-tractor drawn whim.*





▲ *Crawler-tractor drawn jinker. Note the tracked rear bogies.*

it. To enable this, the lead pair of bullocks would haul the whim pole backwards into an upright position.

Once the belly chain was secured in place the bullocky moved his team forward to haul down the pole, with the aid of block and tackle, and lift the log off the ground. The pole was then lashed to the log, the team hitched up and away they would go.

Having each log "heavy on" meant that whenever tension was off the hauling chains the log would nose into the ground with a braking effect. In addition, the swamper rode the whim and applied its wheel brake if needed. Despite these precautions, teams would often have to gallop to stay ahead of the log on the down-hill hauls, but generally the whim and log would be nursed slowly along, the log gently touching


the ground and rising again, to the sound of the bullocky coaxing and cursing his team.

Bullocks seemed to attract more colourful language than their counterpart, the horse, which is more intelligent and easier to work. One can almost hear the bullocky cursing and blaspheming his way through a bog or over a hill, and see his team, straining in harness, bellies touching the ground, legs out and back, and quivering for more push, and tongues almost dragging on the ground—literally "tonguing it".

From the 1930s to the early 1940s crawler tractors replaced bullocks and horses for pulling the whims. The whims were later replaced by various aids such as "sulkies", jinkers and finally logging arches

drawn by tracked dozers often fitted with loading forks.

The most commonly used machines today are the rubber-tyred articulated logging tractors with either a built-in or trailing logging arch and usually with loading forks at the front. However, as always, there is a variety of equipment in operation.

Tearing chain-saws and screaming, high-powered diesels have replaced the ring and swish of axe and crosscut saw and the colourful language of the bullocky. Despite this, the bush is still a great place, the bushman a great bloke and the whim a reminder of gentler, more innovative times. 

▼ *Logging karri with a bulldozer and rubber-tyred arch in the late 1960s.*



### Back cover

*Repairing and manufacturing of wheels for whims and steam haulers. Note the drive sprockets on the foreground wheel.*

*The "Harry Stephens" mechanical log hauler in the Yarloop bush. Built by George W. Kelly, Melbourne, it was the first of its kind in Australia. A vertical boiler steam engine was used to power chain-driven 3.5 m diameter rear wheels. The "Harry Stephens" ceased working in about 1913.*

