

Over the weeks, Turley explored all the significant sites: the cemeteries at Tambaroora; Golden Gully; Bald Hill; Hawkins Hill; Nuggetty Gully and the village itself, but none seemed 'right' for artistic intervention. So, as luck would have it, in the routine of collecting firewood from the old potting shed at the rear of the cottage, Turley made a discovery. In the words of the artist: *While getting some wood for the fire I found an old bottle in the wood shed in the backyard. There was a dirt floor in the wood shed. I scratched some dirt and found more pieces of glass. I designated an old bone as my digging tool and began moving the soil slowly. Within seconds I had found another bottle and a myriad of broken glass pieces. I retired my bone after a while and went to get a shovel. My new plan was to excavate the shed like artist Mark Dion would do in one of his quasi-archaeological projects.*

*Over the next week I dug the entire shed floor searching down as far as the loose soil would allow. The top 60cm or more was littered with old bottles and artefacts. Old shoes, inkwells, pieces of ceramic kitchenware, the remains of a toy airplane, a bottle opener, rusted tobacco and food tins, a watch face. I traced the ages of the items and they could be dated to the same period when Donald Friend resided at the cottage and some even earlier. I wanted to use the items to create a work that was sensitive to the site.*

Turley's installation is, in effect, a fine piece of post-vernacular intervention. In the past, the vernacular character of Hill End was created through necessity – galvanised iron; timber slabs; bricks; stones; doors and windows were re-cycled and deployed to create a vivid unconscious aesthetic, a utilitarian expression of need that continues to underpin the unique ambience of the place.

*Last Drinks*, David Turley's quirky chandelier of resurrected bottle-necks hangs in the wood shed surrounded on the walls by some of the more intact objects found in the excavation, including an empty bottle of Gewürztraminer Riesling. The sculpture elicits a joyous response from viewers who marvel at Turley's skilful artistry while the richness of its context takes time to savour. *Last Drinks*, with its whimsical, romantic air and fragile nature, underscores the artist's salute to the spirit of the bacchanal and the memory of good times.

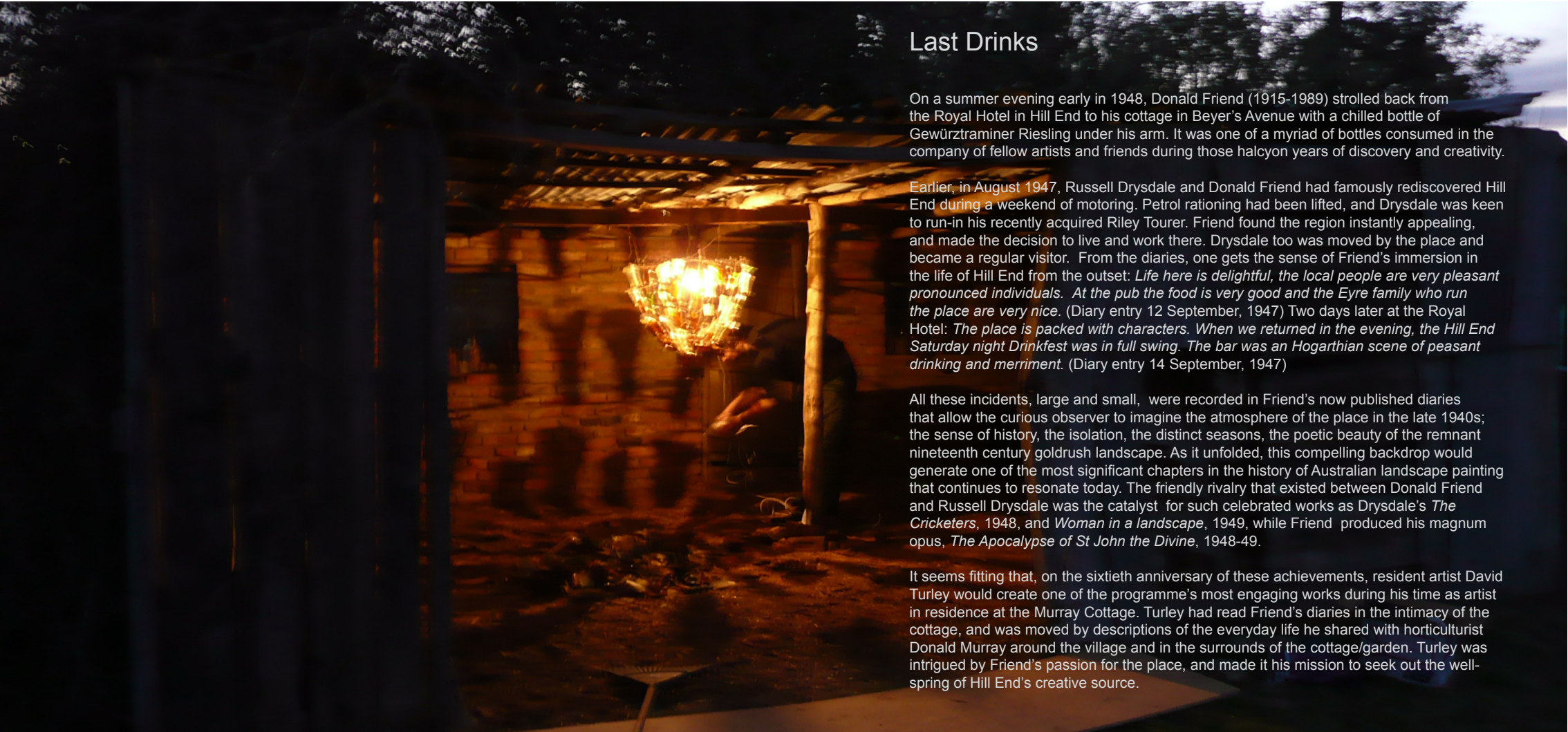
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Bathurst  
regional art gallery



Last Drinks: Hill End 2008  
David Turley



## Last Drinks

On a summer evening early in 1948, Donald Friend (1915-1989) strolled back from the Royal Hotel in Hill End to his cottage in Beyer's Avenue with a chilled bottle of Gewürztraminer Riesling under his arm. It was one of a myriad of bottles consumed in the company of fellow artists and friends during those halcyon years of discovery and creativity.

Earlier, in August 1947, Russell Drysdale and Donald Friend had famously rediscovered Hill End during a weekend of motoring. Petrol rationing had been lifted, and Drysdale was keen to run-in his recently acquired Riley Tourer. Friend found the region instantly appealing, and made the decision to live and work there. Drysdale too was moved by the place and became a regular visitor. From the diaries, one gets the sense of Friend's immersion in the life of Hill End from the outset: *Life here is delightful, the local people are very pleasant pronounced individuals. At the pub the food is very good and the Eyre family who run the place are very nice.* (Diary entry 12 September, 1947) Two days later at the Royal Hotel: *The place is packed with characters. When we returned in the evening, the Hill End Saturday night Drinkfest was in full swing. The bar was an Hogarthian scene of peasant drinking and merriment.* (Diary entry 14 September, 1947)

All these incidents, large and small, were recorded in Friend's now published diaries that allow the curious observer to imagine the atmosphere of the place in the late 1940s; the sense of history, the isolation, the distinct seasons, the poetic beauty of the remnant nineteenth century goldrush landscape. As it unfolded, this compelling backdrop would generate one of the most significant chapters in the history of Australian landscape painting that continues to resonate today. The friendly rivalry that existed between Donald Friend and Russell Drysdale was the catalyst for such celebrated works as Drysdale's *The Cricketers*, 1948, and *Woman in a landscape*, 1949, while Friend produced his magnum opus, *The Apocalypse of St John the Divine*, 1948-49.

It seems fitting that, on the sixtieth anniversary of these achievements, resident artist David Turley would create one of the programme's most engaging works during his time as artist in residence at the Murray Cottage. Turley had read Friend's diaries in the intimacy of the cottage, and was moved by descriptions of the everyday life he shared with horticulturist Donald Murray around the village and in the surrounds of the cottage/garden. Turley was intrigued by Friend's passion for the place, and made it his mission to seek out the well-spring of Hill End's creative source.