

AUSTRALIAN
FOREST HISTORY

SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No.5

1990

ISSN 1033-937 X

*' ... to advance historical understanding of human interactions with
Australian forest and woodland environments.'*

Changes for the Newsletter

This will be the last issue of the newsletter produced at the Reprographic Centre of the Australian Defence Force Academy. The assistance of Ron Campbell and staff at the Centre has been very much appreciated since production of the first newsletter in 1988. The next issue will be produced at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Regrettably, but inevitably, another change is that from 1991 a small subscription/membership charge will have to apply to cover production and mailing costs. This will be \$5 per annum and a form for payment is included in this issue.

At the first national Conference on Australian Forest History in 1988, it was agreed the AFHS convenors would plan a second conference 2-3 years later.

The first conference clearly showed a wide interest in forest history and a second conference would aim to build on this. Sections in the first conference were devoted to ecological history, forests and Aboriginal society, public forestry, forest industries and labour, regional approaches, conservation and national parks and sources for the forest history. We would like to obtain the views of members on a second conference and a short questionnaire is included on the reverse of the payment form. Any other thoughts or ideas are welcome.



From: The Dandenongs (Palmer, 1952)



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PUBLICATIONS

NEW ZEALAND

FOREST SERVICE MEMOIRS TO BE PUBLISHED

A book containing a mix of historical chronology and informal anecdotal reminiscences as well as a pictorial record of the Forest Service is scheduled for publication early in the new year.

The book utilises anecdotal material assembled by freelance writer Brian Mackrell at the instigation of Director General Alan Familton during the Forest Service's final year. This material has been revised and supplemented by former Forest Service staff John Halkett and Peter Berg. They have also written an historical outline of the natural and social heritage which the Forest Service has bequeathed the nation.

The text is complemented by more than 100 black and white photographs which portray the people, places and activities of the Forest Service.

This book is not intended to be a formal history, but rather an attempt to show the human face and range of activities performed by the Forest Service.

"Tree People" will be a limited edition publication and will be sold largely by way of a discounted pre-publication offer.

Further information and order forms can be obtained from

"Tree People"
PO Box 10 310
Wellington
New Zealand

(For more information contact John Halkett, telephone New Zealand (089) 489 299).

* * * * *

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON NEW ZEALAND FORESTS AND FORESTRY

Holm, R. 1990 *Logs and Locomotives. A King Country Bushman's Story*. Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 128 pp.

Roche, M.M., 1990 The New Zealand Timber Economy 1840-1935 *Journal of Historical Geography* 16(3): 295-313.

Roche, M.M. 1990 Perspectives on the post 1984 restructuring of State Forestry in New Zealand. *Environment and Planning A* 22(7): 941-959.

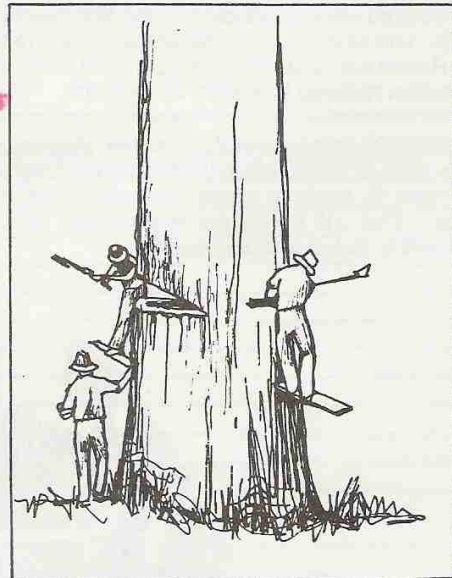
Clawson, M. 1988 *Public Forests in New Zealand and the United States*, Resources for the Future, Discussion Paper No. RR 88-01.

Fischman, R. and Nagle, R.L., 1989 Corporatisation: Implementing Forest Management Reform in New Zealand, *Ecology Law Review* 16(3): 719-754.

FEATURE ARTICLES

Article by Val Quanchi, 125 Collin Street, Mentone, Vic 3194. Provided by Jack Gabbedy to Jenny Mills (WA)

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN RACING AXE



Sketch from *Forest and Timber* 16(1) 1980

For the past half million years from the day that man discovered that by chipping stone he could make an instrument, the axe, man has benefitted. Initially used as a forage implement and later in the progressive ages of man as an instrument of war it was to leave behind a devastation of life that is hard to comprehend today.

The axe left behind scars that today are still with us. Gone are the great forests of Lebanon, the Oak forests of

England, the Spanish forests and in the new countries of America and Australia, the past century has seen the last of the world's virgin timber removed for progress. From past history much has been learnt of the development of these countries and of man himself. Of the axe he used we have obtained relics which have shown that the axe in principle has remained the same throughout the ages in basic design. First were the stone axes followed by bronze, iron and in the 19th Century, steel.

It was the opening of the vast continent of U.S.A. with its great forests that first saw the axe mass-produced by the Collins Axe Company in 1826 for the timber of that continent.

In Australia from the days of first settlement, all tools and equipment used by the convicts and later free settlers were those which were brought out from England. These tools, especially the axe, were of patterns and design totally unsuited for the Australian conditions. English axes used to cut Alder, Oak, Pine and other timbers were far from proficient for use on the Australian hardwoods. These had a long shank, narrow cutting blades and long handles which over the centuries had been adapted to local English conditions. They had remained basically the same for centuries and the adage that if it was good enough for my father then it is good enough for me was the answer. That it was inefficient, unwieldy and energy wasting was not important in that era of our Colony, as convict labour was cheap.

The decades following settlement saw no change in the axe as all equipment was brought from England at Government expense. The availability of land in the 1830s brought English migrants and this continued through the 1840s till the gold rush. The 1850s saw a great influx of gold-seekers from Europe, Asia and the United States of America. As the surface gold cut out and mining became deep shafts, more and more timber was required not only for the shafts but for furnaces, charcoal and house building. This required a larger work force and many of the Europeans, in particular Italians, became timber cutters.

As the gold became less readily obtainable and with land development progressing along the eastern coast of Australia and in West Australia these timber cutters also became scrub fallers, ring barkers and sleeper cutters. There appeared at this stage a very small number of axes from overseas, particularly American axes. By the 1870s the axemen's sole implement was an all important tool and there were but two reliable brands to choose from. While the imported axes had thick blades the Australian fine bladed axe was more suitable. Whilst reference is made in old records no name or manufacturer's name has come to light and it can only be presumed that these Australian axes were made by local blacksmiths. Some of the axes available were the Collins, Plumb and Kelly from the U.S., the Elwell, Braide, Gilpin from England, and the Jarrahdale from Sweden. It is interesting to note that the Elwell Company after 190 years has now ceased operations.

The year 1870 could be said to be the beginning of a serious interest in the development of an axe entirely suitable for the Australian hardwoods and the Australian Racing Axe. It was this year that the Australian timber cutters started woodchopping as a competitive sport. By 1891 it was being conducted under competitive rules and involved axemen throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Speed in cutting logs of equal given diameters in heats was the essence, with large prize money being awarded to the fastest cutter. This greatly influenced the demand and need for a faster, better balanced axe of higher quality steel. This became an era of trial and error by axemen and blacksmiths who began to search for and develop an axe not only suitable for work but also for their sport of woodchopping.

Up to this period and for several more decades, axes were being manufactured and cast of high grade charcoal smelted steel which was soft and malleable. It was not till well into the 20th Century that drop forged axes were manufactured. Axes were generally made of this cast steel from a piece 2 1/2 inches wide by 1 inch thick. This was split open from the eye and another piece inserted and welded by the use of a mandrel to form the head. After the shaping of the head another split was made in the blade and a piece of high grade carbon steel inserted and welded to form the cutting blade. This was heat tempered and in itself was a very skilful operation as any excess heat would form a bad scarf between the two steels.

Axes would range from hatchets to those weighing nine pounds and had very large polles (the portion of the head above the eye or handle hole of the axehead). The polle was anything up to 1 and 1 1/2 inches thick which allowed the axeman to use the back of the head as a sledge hammer or mallet.

At the turn of the century, Tom Petit, a champion Australian axeman and representative for the Lafayette Plumb Axe Company, U.S.A., took the initiative when he visited the parent Company in the United States and proposed that they produce an axe suitable to the Australian conditions. He supplied the information and details of what the axeman required and the company quickly produced an axe solely designed for Australia. This was to become known as the Plumb Tasmanian Pattern axe. It became a very popular axe not only for working with but in competition also. This axe had a round polle, better weight distribution, with weights ranging from 3.5 to 5 pounds and better steel in the blade to suit the hardwoods. At the same time the Company produced the Yankee Pattern axe which had a square polle and was of spring tempered steel.

In 1911 the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria became the first State Society to introduce woodchopping as a sport at their annual Show. This was soon followed by other States and had further influence on the development of the axe. At Royal and country shows it was common to see blacksmiths watching to see how their hand-made axes were standing up to the pressures

of competitive cutting. It is recognised that the power of an axeman swinging his axe is equal to a ton weight dropping one foot in height. The impact of the fine bladed axe striking and cutting the hard timber therefore required the best of tempered steel. Not only was the steel an important factor but also the grinding, the shape and very fine cutting edge equally important.

Albert Kleink, a blacksmith who had a small forge at Flemington, Melbourne, was a regular visitor at the Royal where he watched competitors using his hand-made axes. Albert was an expert in making swords and bayonets and taught many an Armoury Sergeant at Victoria Barracks. Another blacksmith was George Craft of New South Wales who conceived the idea to make an axe that would produce a bigger chip and cut faster than the general axe. He was to become very successful in making axes which in appearance were very similar to the racing axe of today. In 1914 at the Gosford Show, New South Wales, he exhibited an axe as the First Australian Axe. This was however never manufactured other than individual axes he produced for axemen.

By the 1920s there was still not an axe being manufactured which was ideal for Australian conditions. United States, English and Swedish companies were producing identical axes but whilst they were efficient they did not still satisfy axemen. World demand for axes at this period was so great that Kelly Axe and Tool Company alone were producing 18 000 axes and tools per day. They produced over 400 different named axes for United States alone. It was at this period that Kelly produced the famous 'Dandenong Kelly' for the Australian market. This was to become a very popular axe amongst competitors and is still manufactured today under licence by Cyclone Industries. As the story is told, this axe was made as the direct result of an American axeman attending the St Pat's Sports Day at Dandenong, Melbourne, and on returning home asked the Kelly Company to produce that Dandenong axe the Australians were using.

The outbreak of World War II saw a new effort to produce the Australian axe. The war stopped all imports of axes and with no imports of steel and limited quantities available in Australia companies were requested to manufacture supplies in Australia. Keech Castings Pty Ltd of New South Wales who were founded in 1933 as a casting foundry carried out extensive research. For the first time in history, this resulted in a cast steel so improved in character that edged tools were able to be produced by mould casting. As a result the company became the first to produce an Australian axe on a production line. These axes were produced under the name of 'KEESTEEL'.

In the same year Australian Consolidated Industries had acquired an engineering firm which provided the Company with a drop forge plant at Sydney and acquired a contract with the Defence Forces to supply hatchets. These they produced from zircon steel which was the only available steel at the time and was not entirely satisfactory. Not having the technical expertise Australia

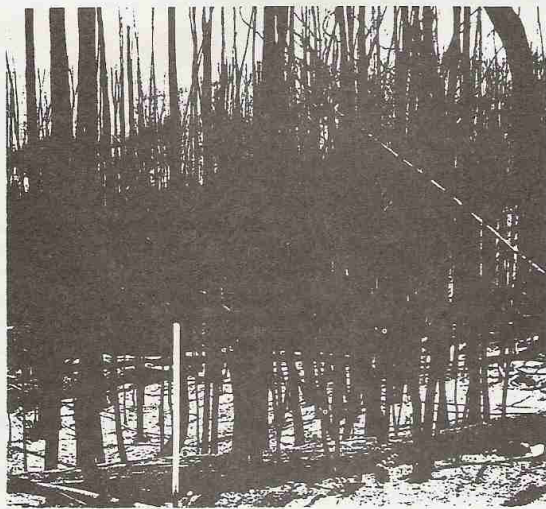
was in great trouble to supply the correct steels required for the war effort. A.C.I. in consultation with B.H.P., Australia's only manufacturer of steel, experimented to find the correct steel suitable for axes. It was not until 1944 that a suitable steel was developed which was suitable for manufacture by drop forging. The Company quickly produced the first Australian drop forged axe and within six months the axes were used by competitors at the Royal Sydney Show and gained all placing in the World Tree-felling event. These axes whilst all-Australian manufactured were still based on imported axe patterns. Both Keech and Hytest Axe and Tool Company, now a subsidiary of A.C.I., became the only Australian Companies producing axes with Australian steel and technology.

With the completion of the war, importation of axes recommenced and both companies began to feel the impact. In consultation with timber men and competitive axemen each commenced a serious study of what was required in an axe to be of the highest quality and to contain all the essentials such as balance, blade size, thickness and angle of the bust, plus even weight distribution at the head of the blade. Hytest in their first axes had a round polle which did not provide a good balance and by 1949 they had flared the blade and returned to a square polle. Keech were also following in a similar style and at this time another competitor entered the field. This was Percy Miller of Collingwood, Melbourne, who designed a competitive axe much similar in design to the Cyclone but which was drop forged and of high quality. However Percy Miller did not mass produce his axes but preferred to sell them to selected axemen of above average skills. Today one of these axes is highly valued.

By taking their axes out into the bush and talking with the axemen who were not only timber cutters but also competitors, Hytest continued their research and study to produce an axe which could be readily adapted to the various hardwood timbers of Australia. They were producing axes of a high quality and by 1950 were exporting them overseas, competing against overseas companies. By 1950 they had produced an axe which was suitable not only for field work but also for competitive purposes. This was a 5lb axe with a 6 inch blade. In 1965 the Company was sold to Trojan Tool Company, a family enterprise and it is still producing racing axes.

By 1960 axemen were still looking for a better competitive axe and Clive McIntosh, himself a champion axeman with a long family history associated with the sport, approached Keech Brothers with several designs of what he proposed a racing axe should be. As a result the company produced axes cast of his design and which he grounds to become a racing axe to suit individual requirements. These range from various grinds and shapes for the hardwood timbers of Queensland, New South Wales and West Australia to the large fine grind axes required in the southern States of Victoria and Tasmania.

In 1977 Hytest produced an axe of 5 lb weight with a 7 inch blade and have in production 3 axes specifically designed for competitive use. These with Clive McIntosh's axes are eagerly sought by overseas competitors in New Zealand, Spain, U.S.A., Canada and Great Britain. By the 1980s the joint effort by the timber men, woodchopping competitors and the Axe Manufacturers had produced the Australian Racing Axe. A precision instrument of high quality Australian steel solely developed by Australians for their unique sport of competitive speed woodchopping. With over 100 years of development the search still goes on however, for that ultimate axe.



(Source: Forest and Timber 22, 1986)

HOW FORESTS AND TREES ARE RECOVERING AT MT MACEDON, VICTORIA, AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY (FEBRUARY 16TH, 1983)

February 1st and 16th 1983 will live long in the memories of the residents of the townships of Macedon and Mt Macedon. On the first of these days a fire swept into Mt Macedon from the Woodend locality, pushed along by a strong northerly causing the destruction of 24 homes and many outbuildings and burning practically the whole of the Mt Macedon Forest Park, including the famous and picturesque gardens of ornamental trees and shrubs and the native snow gums surrounding the striking Memorial Cross on the top of the mountain. Some 80 hectares of

alpine ash (*E. delegatensis*) were destroyed as well as a large area of mixed eucalypt forest both within and outside the Forest Park and about 150 hectares of mature softwood plantations, mainly *Pinus radiata* but also Douglas fir, cedar and redwood.

If this wasn't bad enough, on the second of these dates, February 16th, another fire to the west of Macedon township approached the mountain, fanned by a strong northwesterly wind late in the afternoon. To the consternation of those fighting this fire, the wind changed direction and a strong southerly sprang up, not accompanied, as is generally the case, by a large drop in temperature and even rain. Instead the fire spread from the south up the mountain destroying a further 399 homes, doing enormous damage to some of the most beautiful and famous gardens and specimen trees in the State. Large areas of natural vegetation on public and private land were also severely damaged. In all, this fire burnt over some 29 500 hectares.

The recovery phase of the forests in the seven and one half years following these fires is now at an interesting stage and many of the scars have been healed, although sadly the traumas suffered by many people as a result of losing all their possessions and heritage have not all healed.

The snow gums (*E. pauciflora*) which cover the top of the mountain (about 3000 metres elevation) are still standing with their white dead trunks very noticeable, but coppice and seedlings of this species have now reached about 2 metres or so in height and are interspersed with a dense crop of black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*). This wattle extends in dense stands through the alpine ash (*E. delegatensis*) natural areas below the snow gum territory and obviously acts as a nurse crop to the young ash regeneration. The fire-killed ash trees were felled and salvaged soon after the fires. Natural regeneration is prolific and aided by some enrichment sowing has ensured that the area is now fully stocked. This regrowth is now up to 8 metres in height with growth now of at least 1 metre per year.

The mixed eucalypt forests at lower elevations contain species which unlike alpine ash, are not normally killed by wildfire. These are mainly *E. obliqua* (messmate), *E. viminalis* (manna gum), *E. aromaphloia* (scented bark) and *E. australiana* (narrow leaf peppermint). These are recovering through the development of epicormic growths from dormant buds along the trunks and main branches. New crowns have now developed quite well on most of these trees. Some however were so affected by the unusual heat of this fire that they have not developed a new crown and the epicormic growths have died off. If near roads, houses or powerlines these have now largely been removed. There are not as many large trees as previously, but good natural revegetation

From a distance now, as one approaches the Macedon Ranges, the natural forest appears to be recovering well. Native animals such as wallabies, koalas, wombats, and birds have made a good come-back. Nothing seems to have been eliminated by this disaster. The *Pinus radiata*

plantations near the base of the mountain, some of which were more than 30 years old have been felled and salvaged. Most of the *Pinus radiata* sites have been replanted with this species, but some special sites have been converted back to eucalypts and native species. An effort has also been made to develop some wildlife corridors to connect the native forest areas.

As far as the extensive private gardens are concerned, most have now been restored but of course have sustained the loss of large conifers and broad-leaved trees which will take many years to replace in their former glory. It is interesting to see some species such as the redwoods (*Sequoia*) struggling to develop new epicormic crowns, but somehow they are not quite the same!

Fortunately some of the most famous gardens, such as Alton, Hascombe, Matlock, Durroll, Sefton and Forest-Glade, were only slightly damaged so that there are still samples of what had been established in 100 years or more of loving care in this most favoured tree growing area.

Further monitoring should be done to further follow the recovery stages of both the native forests and the introduced species.

(Dr) F.R. Moulds
Mt Macedon Vic

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE STATES

TASMANIA

The Forestry Commission Tasmania is engaged in compiling an inventory of historic sites in the forested areas of the State. The project, funded by a National Estate Grant, is being undertaken as three separate regional studies. The first of these reports, Scripps, Lindy 1990 North-West Tasmania. Historic Sites Inventory Project, has been completed. The North-East study is being undertaken by Denise Gaughwin and will be completed in December 1990. The South-East regional study will begin in October 1990 and is due for completion in February 1991.

The North-East study recorded 215 historic sites of which 114 are in the State Forest. The sites were identified from researching published and archival sources and by oral informants many of whom were Forestry Commission or Industry personnel.

The most common site types were those associated with the timber and forest industries of the first four decades of the twentieth century. These were old sawmills, logging ramps, wooden tramways, arboretum and forestry camps. Sites related to the mining industry, including mineral extraction areas, processing plants, dams, water

racers and abandoned mining towns, were well represented. Other sites recorded include abandoned farms, tracks, roads, tramways, railways and a miscellaneous group which includes sawpits, charcoal pits, horse troughs and snarers huts.

The ultimate aim of these projects is to identify significant historic sites in the Tasmanian forests so as to ensure their protection under the Forest Practices Code. Significance is based on the importance of the site to an historical period, person or event, and the sites ability to demonstrate, for example, a process, technique or custom. The preservation of the site and its research potential or educational potential are also considered in determining the level of significance.

If any members have information of use to these projects could they inform the Senior Archaeologist Anne McConnell, G.P.O. Box 207B, Hobart Tas. 7001.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Jenny Mills is currently working on a history of the Forest Industries Federation (W.A.) Inc. This Federation grew out of the original Timber Merchants' Association founded in 1985, and it is interesting to note its progress with similar institutions in the other Australian states. The history will look at the Federation's historical role in four sections :

- 1) Conservation of the West Australian forest resources
- 2) Forest Industries development
- 3) Forest products promotion and research
- 4) Workforce health, safety & training

Jenny Mills gave a paper at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Australian National University, Canberra in July on the Federation's role in conserving the W.A. resource. Work is still in progress on that topic.

FOREST HISTORY INTERNATIONALLY

The Forest History Group of the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) is very active at present with a meeting just held in Montreal and several planned in 1991.



The Group met for three sessions during the IUFRO XIX World Congress in Montreal with a wide range of papers being presented. Australian contributions were made by J. Dargavel (The Place of Timber Merchant Firms in the Structure of the Industry) and G. Henning (The Lumber Export Trade of the Pacific Northwest and Australia, 1890-1914). Pete Steen, who many members met when he visited Australia, was elected leader with Dr Andree Corvol (France) as deputy and Drs H. Rubner (Germany) and Dr Elisabeth Johann (Austria) as co-leaders. Alice Ingerson, the editor of Forest and Conservation History (formerly the Journal of Forest History) and John Dargavel were elected to lead the Tropical Forest History Working Group. Marcia Lambert (Forestry Commission of NSW) became a member of IUFRO's peak governing body.

Forthcoming forest history meetings are:

17-23 February Costa Rica - San Jose and Forest Research Station. History of forests in South and Central America. (This follows on from the 1988 Canberra meeting on the history of forests in Asia, Australasia and the Pacific). The Rockefeller Foundation is supporting travel for people from developing countries and the publication of the proceedings.

27 May - 4 June Hawaii - Sessions have been arranged within the Pacific Science Congress on the 'History of the forest economy of the Pacific Rim'. This will concentrate on the linkages across the Pacific, especially the timber trade, and their impacts on the forests.

For details of meetings ring **John Dargavel**
(06) 249 4741

A European Association for Environmental History has been formed and has just published the first issue of its Environmental History Newsletter. Incidentally, the American Society for Environmental History has changed the name of the Environmental Review to the Environmental History Review.

AUSTRALIAN FOREST HISTORY
NEWSLETTER

SUBSCRIPTION 1991: \$5

Name:.....

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Send to: Australian Forest History
Newsletter
C/- Dr J. Dargavel
CRES, ANU
GPO Box 4
Canberra ACT 2600

Please make cheques payable to:

Australian Forest History Society.



Proposed Second National Conference on Australian Forest History

(i) Do you support the holding of a second conference?

.....

If so, when? (Give more than one time if you wish)

.....

(ii) Subject to timing and location, would you attend?

.....

Present a paper?

Purchase proceedings?

(iii) What themes do you think should be included?

.....

.....

.....

(iv) Do you support a conference structure that keeps

registration charges low?

(v) Would you be able to assist with organization/running of the conference? If yes, please specify.

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(vi) Other comments

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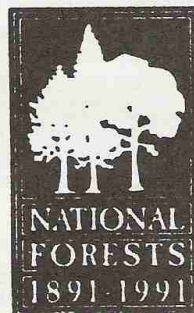
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Send to Dr J. Dargavel at address on reverse (preferably by February 1991).

US FOREST HISTORY

NATIONAL FOREST CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE



University of Montana Will Host

On 30 March 1891 President Benjamin Harrison used his newly acquired authority to proclaim the Yellowstone Park Timberland Reserve, the nation's first. In 1907 the reserves were renamed national forests, and most of the Yellowstone reserve is now included in the Shoshone National Forest. As part of a year-long centennial celebration, there will be a 20-23 June 1991 conference in Missoula on the origins of the national forest system co-sponsored by the University of Montana, National Forest Service Museum, USDA Forest Service, and the Forest History Society.

The Forest Service, since 1905 the administrative agency for the national forests, has awarded the Forest History Society a grant to organize and implement this centennial conference. Preliminary plans show a day of scholarly papers focusing on the formative years of this ambitious "experiment" in land management, followed by historical workshops for public land interpreters.

Other centennial programs include a special exhibit at the Buffalo Bill Historic Center in Cody, Wyoming, a "class reunion" on Colorado's white River National Forest (the second national forest, proclaimed in 1891) for Forest Service retirees, and a futures symposium at the Pinchot Institute of Conservation Studies, Milford, Pennsylvania. For information on any of the centennial events, contact either FHS headquarters or Robert Hendricks, Forest Service Centennial Coordinator, Washington, D.C.

Forest History Society
701 Vickers Ave
Datham NC
USA 27701

(From: The Cruiser 13(2) Summer 1990)

REVIEWS

Holm, Roly. *Logs and Locomotives: A King Country Bushman's Story* (1990), Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, New Zealand

This is a fascinating account of the 17 years one New Zealander spent working in the timber industry. Roly Holm worked in this industry on the North Island of New Zealand from 1928 to 1945. The book begins with a forward by M. Roche of Massey University which is particularly valuable to the Australian reader as it puts Roly's work experiences in the context of the history of the New Zealand timber industry in general.

The book has been produced by Holm's daughter in law, Beppie Holm, who recorded Holm's stories on tape and then transcribed and edited them. The great strength of the book is the immediacy produced by this oral history method. We hear the stories as they would have been told a thousand times by Roly. His stories flow well, no doubt as a result of years practise re-telling them. It is ironic then that one important theme that emerges from the book is the fading art of story telling. Roly fondly recounts the nights spent in timber camps around a fire yarning before the days when mass media began to undermine this art.

The book provides fascinating insights into the culture of saw milling communities, bush life and New Zealander attitudes to the bush. A tension clearly emerges in Roly's account between pride in his hard and dangerous work and a sadness in seeing the changes this work was making on the beautiful timbered country he came to love. As Roly notes (p75) "I actually had quite mixed feelings about clearing the bush". This is a feeling that grows stronger through the book reflecting the growing doubts he developed as he learnt to appreciate the bush. He goes on to speak (p90), for example, of how "while I appreciated the work and the money it paid, I really wished the trees could have remained standing and their beautiful surroundings left undisturbed."

Roly worked both as a timber cutter and as a steam engine fireman. He describes working as a fireman both on the trains that hauled timber to the mills and on the steam haulers that were used before the arrival of diesel haulers after World War 2 to pull fallen logs to the railway. His descriptions of the cooperative work required when crosscutting timber are particularly interesting. He speaks (p84), for example, of how he and his mate "had to work together as a machine, yet understand the strength and endurance of the other to know when to keep going and when to stop for a breather. The need to adjust our cutting platform soon became the accepted signal for a break. Whether it was genuine or not we both understand and never questioned the other's motives."

The book also provides a good description of the impact the depression had on the timber industry. The mill Roly worked for responded by having a shorter working week and stockpiling the timber that no longer had a market.

Roly describes how he supplemented his income during this period by rabbiting. Eventually, however, the mill closed down all together and Roly spent the rest of the depression either working 2 days a week on relief road gang or working for farmers clearing land. He describes with some bitterness one farmer who exploited the depression by not paying him but just supplying keep. As he points out he was, however, much better off than the married men who had families to support. His account of how tough life was for such men includes details of a daring raid they made on a goods train to steal goods to feed their children.

One senses reading the book that Roly is a "tough" man protective of his private life. His description of meeting, courting and marrying his wife takes only one page. Details of their growing family are even more limited. The book is not about such things but just about the 17 years of bush life. He is clearly making a statement about the importance to him of these years as a single man. In so doing it closely mirrors Albert Facey's superb account of his life in the bush of Western Australia. In both cases they are saying life in the bush is the experience that shaped them. In both cases there is also that clear focus of recollection that comes from 50 years of thinking about the past, sifting through what is important and what is not.

It should be clear by now to any reader of this review that this book has important parallels specifically to the Australian timber industry and more generally to Australian attitudes towards the bush and the influence of these on national stereotypes. The social environment portrayed in this book of hard dangerous work, beer and rugby clearly had a role in shaping the archetypal stereotypes of "Kiwi" male character. There is obviously much to learn from New Zealand for those of us interested in Australian cultural history. In particular there are obvious parallels in the role of bush work in the formation of national identity and at the same time of the need to separate out archetypes from reality.

The similarities between Australia and New Zealand are often striking but the contrasts are at the same time sufficient to raise thought provoking issues. Similarities include the gambling (Roly describes two up dens on pay day), the drinking, the emphasis on sport and terminology (the term "the bush" is used in the same way Australians do). Interesting contrasting include just how different New Zealand forests are from Australian ones and historical-cultural differences such as the contrasting roles Aboriginal and Maori people play in the two nations. As a student of Aboriginal history it was fascinating to read about a respect for indigenous culture rare indeed in Australia. Much of the work Roly did was on Maori land and he describes the obligations this meant his employers had to these people.

I can thoroughly recommend this book, it is easy to read and provides an incisive insight into one man's life. The oral history approach gives a view of what life was like that is not available through the conventional historians approach of researching just written documents. History from the "grass-roots" is more egalitarian and gives us the

chance to see history through the eyes of one who lived it.

Richard Baker
Curator of the Environment
National Museum of Australia

* * * * *

Watson, Ian
Fighting over the forests (1990) Allen and Unwin,
Sydney. xxi + 173 pp.
ISBN 0 04 442208 3. RRP \$17.95

A major part of the environmental conflict in Australia over the last two decades has centred around the management of the forests. This conflict deserves the attention of forest historians and others because it is a significant part of the nation's social and environmental history.

From the late 1970s, two particular environmental issues caught huge national attention: preservation of New South Wales rainforests and the Franklin River in Tasmania. As a result of the rainforest campaign, the New South Wales government in October 1982 decided to halt or phase out rainforest logging and expand the National Park system. Four years later approximately 200,000 ha of the forests were inscribed on the World Heritage list as 'the Australian East Coast Temperate and Sub-tropical Rainforest Parks'. Behind these rapid and bold events there was however, a human story and this is the subject of Ian Watson's book. Specifically its focus is on class relations and in particular, it deliberately gives a greater voice to the timber workers (the 'manual working class') whose 'cultural world' is less well understood compared with the well publicised views of the 'middle class' conservation movement. The book is mainly a sociological analysis of the conflict.

The underlying theme of the book is that people inhabit 'cultural worlds' which are constructed from a diversity of elements: their working lives, gender and family relations, friendships, communities, local environment, sport and entertainment. Underlying all these are the class relations of contemporary Australian society. The book critically contrasts the world views of timber workers and conservationists using the north coast New South Wales rainforest conflict as a case study.

The book begins with a brief historical overview of the timber industry: the early uncontrolled exploitation, the massive demands of World War II, changes in technology, the post-war decline in sawmill numbers, the anarchy of timber marketing, the shift to use of exotic pine, and the often ambivalent role of the Forestry Commission. Subsequent chapters examine working life in the timber industry, working-class culture and constructions of nature and history. Evident from this are the poor working conditions and safety record in the industry in which many workers have been effectively trapped. This is due in

large part to the ineffectiveness of the Timber Workers' Union which for many years has been regarded as a 'bosses' union'. Nevertheless, the hard nature of the work, coupled with a heroic masculine mythology has formed a key part of working class culture. Another element of this culture is the contradictory attitudes to 'book learning' (exemplified by foresters with degrees) which is often treated with contempt but also recognised as a means of advancement and opportunity.

It is in the imagery of nature and social construction of history that Watson draws a strong contrast between timber workers and conservationists. Worker experience of the bush was live and intimate but based on a productivist view (resources should be used not wasted even though it was sad at times to see the big trees fall). The workers' history of people and the forests combines heroic pioneering, with recognition of waste and destruction but is silent on many aspects. This history has been built from within the local world of family, community and folklore and carries a sense of time rooted in place. By contrast middle class conservationists brought to the forests a range of intellectual resources and political skills - especially the use of the electronic media which could so effectively convey contrasting images of forest beauty and logging 'destruction'. Nature imagery of the conservationists was intellectually based on spiritual, aesthetic and ecological values (some of the latter drawing on growing scientific research into the Australian rainforests). Similarly their history was academic, precise and constructed a picture of a rapacious industry, oblivious to the interests of the environment and timber workers.

At the material level, the science and religion of ecology was unable to effectively offer economic alternatives to the working-class timber communities of the north coast. Even if the timber industry was in long term decline (this was a disputed point given that the industry had two segments based on rainforest and hardwood timbers respectively), the traditionally unstable nature of working class employment meant that short term job horizons were normal. Middle class concepts of 'career' contrasted with working class ones of a 'job'. Ultimately, normal political bargaining and concession trading was not possible because conservationists had little materially to offer.

In his concluding chapter Watson considers the potential for common ground, noting that the deeper roots of the conflict derive from structural features of contemporary Australian society, in particular the class structure of contemporary capitalism. The 1970s Green Bans movement is seen as an example of an enlightened linkage between ecology and economy. However, a range of factors especially the insecure, dependent nature of rural timber work offers limited promise. The author argues in conclusion that the task for the environment movement is to renew concern for social justice and human equality which was a hallmark of the radical critiques of the 1970s.

Watson's book is recommended to anyone wanting to understand more of the culture worlds occupied by two of the contenders in the forest debate. It is not of course a complete picture. Australia's native forests must serve purposes other than timber production and the failure in the past of governments and their agencies to recognise this has sown some of the seeds of current conflict. Indeed, the absolutes sought by the conservation movement (reservation in National Parks and World Heritage listing) partly derive from a high level of mistrust of less secure reservation and willingness of governments in the past to allow *laissez faire* in the forests and to court large capital for forest projects based on slim knowledge of the resource. Nevertheless, environmentalism will only contribute to a better society if it focuses on means as well as ends, and for this reason alone, the conservation movement should reflect on the message contained in this book.

Kevin Frawley

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT COMMISSION: FOREST AND TIMBER INQUIRY

Public hearings associated with the above Inquiry have now been held throughout Australia in Canberra, Brisbane, Lismore, Sydney, Melbourne, Orbost, Eden, Adelaide, Pemberton (WA), Perth, Darwin, Launceston and Hobart.

The RAC has taken evidence on about 140 submissions from conservation groups, forest industry groups, companies, individuals, research institutions and government agencies. The RAC has been impressed with the quality and abundance of information presented to it and the sheer diversity of opinions expressed. One of the most interesting aspects has been the differences between the various States and regions which have highlighted the complexity of the issues faced by the inquiry.

Associated with these hearings have been a number of field trips:

- inspections of several forest and national park areas in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales;
- a tour of the south-east forests of NSW examining timber industry activities and forest and national estate areas;
- inspections of silvicultural trials and forest areas in east Gippsland;

- an inspection of timber production and conservation areas in the south-western forests of WA; and
- a tour of pine plantations, wetlands and coastal tropical eucalypt and paperbark forests in the Northern Territory.

Earlier in the year the Commission visited the south-east forests of NSW, the Gippsland and Latrobe Valley regions of Victoria, and the northern, central and southern forest regions of Western Australia.

The Commission plans to have a draft report available for public comment in early 1991. This will be followed by a further round of public hearings in mid-1991 with the final report of the inquiry to be made to the Prime Minister in November 1991.

(From: RAC News, No 4 October 1990)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA PLANS FOR A MURRAY-DARLING BASIN EXHIBITION

The National Museum of Australia is developing a brief for a major travelling exhibition on the human and environmental history of the Murray-Darling Basin. In recent years there has been a growing awareness of the environmental issues facing this basin. Our exhibition will explore how relationships between people and the environment have changed over time.

The Murray-Darling Basin is a huge area. The Murray-Darling Basin drains all of the Australian Capital Territory, 75% of New South Wales, 56% of Victoria, 15% of Queensland and 7% of South Australia. Venues within the basin in each of these states and territory will be visited when the exhibition tours. In all the exhibition will tour 20 towns in the basin during 1992-1993.

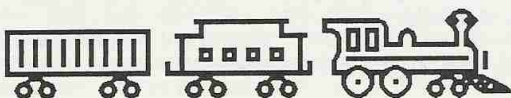
A vital part in the exhibition planning will be involving each local community in developing a component of the exhibition about that region. This component might make up 30% of the total exhibition. The National Museum is committed to as full as possible consultation with each local community on ideas for issues that the exhibition should cover. Research is currently being carried out by the National Museum of Australia developing themes that the exhibition will focus on.

Issues that have so far emerged as important ones include the history of settlement, tree clearance and land use in the basin. Connecting themes such as the history of transport and communication and the important role water has played in the history of the basin will be used to link subjects, places and times.

The exhibition aims at addressing some of the major contemporary issues facing the basin. Issues such as the decline in employment in rural Australia, current land degradation problems and possible solutions will be examined in their historical perspective. We would particularly welcome any ideas on how the forest history of the Murray-Darling Basin could be examined in the exhibition. If you have any ideas on this or would like further details please feel free to contact Richard Baker 062422115 or Ruth Lane 062422117 or on our free line 008026132. You can also write to us National Museum of Australia, GPO Box 1901, Canberra 2601.

Contributions are needed for Newsletter No 6. Please send news of publications, copies of books for review, articles on research projects, any other items of relevance to forest history. The Newsletter is produced on a Macintosh II computer. Contributions may be sent on 3.5 inch disks preferably using Microsoft Word software

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PRODUCTION: THANKS TO JULIE KESBY
AND EILEEN HAMPSON
(WORD PROCESSING, PROOF READING)
PAUL BALLARD (DESIGN)

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