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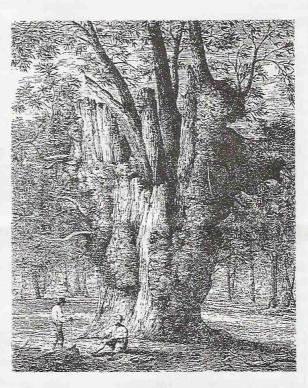
"... to advance historical understanding of human interactions with Australian forest and woodland environments."

NOVEMBER CONFERENCE & CONCEPTS of FOREST AGE

Among all the varied productions with which Nature has adorned the surface of the earth, none awakens our sympathies, or interests, or imagination, so powerfully as those venerable trees which have stood the lapse of ages, silent witnesses of the successive generations of man, to whose destiny they bear so touching a resemblance, alike in their budding, their prime and their decay.

Jacob George Strutt 1826.

Sylva Britannica or
portraits of forest trees,
distiguished for their
antiquity, magnitude or
beauty. Respectfully
dedicated to John, Duke of
Bedford. London: Bohn.



The great Chesnut at Cobham Park

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Australia's ever-changing forests III Third national conference on Australia's forest history 24- 27 November 1996 at Jervis Bay

Planning for the conference is moving ahead with Terry Birtles looking after the venue, Sue Feary arranging the forest and other visits and John Dargavel coordinating the programme. So far, over twenty people have offered papers, the call for papers is still open and there have been many other inquiries. As with our previous conferences, we will have a session where people who do not want to offer a paper can make a short presentation of their work in progress or planned. We will also have a session to review the progress of public forest history, now so active in regional studies associated with the Commonwealth-State regional assessment process.

The tentative programme

Sunday 24 th	Arrive at Jervis Bay in time for (a swim?) the evening meal, registration, informal social.	
Monday 25 th	Day	Workshop on 'Concepts of forest age'
	Evening	Cruise on Jervis Bay, watch dolphins, dinner
Tuesday 25 th	Morning and early afternoon	Papers
	Late afternoon	Forest excursion
Wednesday 26 th	Day	Papers, Short presentations, Session to review historical work by public agencies, General meeting
	Evening	Barbeque in National Botanic Gardens and discussion of joint Aboriginal land management
Thursday 27 th	Check out	Excursion to Beecroft Peninsular, old heathlands and old Banksia forest. Finish early afternoon in time for return to Canberra and Sydney.

Accommodation and conference venue

We have booked the University of Canberra's Field Station which is located within the Commonwealth's National Park and about half a kilometre from the beach. The Station has very basic student-type accommodation but it is very clean and well maintained by the University's local staff. We will arrange supplies so that we can get our own breakfasts in the kitchen/common rooms and a caterer will come in to provide our evening meals on Sunday and Tuesday. The rooms have pillows and blankets, but we have to bring our own linen or sleeping bag and towels (I am sure members will be able to lend some to anybody from overseas). For those who would like a little more comfort, there is a new, small motel at Vincentia, about 5 kilometres away and four at Huskinson about 10 kilometres away. Ten minutes walk away from the Field Station lies the Navy's training establishment, HMAS Creswell, which has excellent conference facilities which we have requested permission to use. The Navy can cater for our morning and afternoon teas, and our lunches - essentials for any conference!

Getting to Jervis Bay

Jervis Bay is 285 kilometres by road from Canberra and 185 kilometres south from Sydney. One can get to Nowra by rail or Greyhound Pioneer bus from Sydney and we will arrange to pick up anybody coming that way. We will have a small mini-bus from Canberra and we will try to arrange a car pool for people coming from various places.

Timetable

Call for papers	As soon as possible	Send tentative title and short abstract
Registration details	July	Will be mailed out with the next Newsletter
Abstract all papers	31 October	Send one-page title and abstract to be included in the programme
Papers on forest age	31 October	Send one hard copy of paper
All papers	24 November	Bring two hard copies and computer disc to conference.

Intriguing concepts of forest age: starting the discussion

John Dargavel

The idea of discussing concepts of forest age in the Australian Forest History conference was stimulated by the attention being given to 'old growth' forests in the public arena. The very term 'old' demands that forest historians examine it, as does 'growth' with its capture of passing time. Its usage in Australia seems recent, an import perhaps from North America. Many people attach great, but different values to 'old growth' forests; why else would their use be so contested? So it cries out for an examination of its meaning and use, of the values people place upon it, and how all these evolved. Although 'old growth' is the focus of public debate, the questions it raises can be taken up generally. What are the various concepts of forest age? How do they apply and what do they mean in different sorts of forest? What values do people place on various ages and types of forest? How do these vary between people? How do concepts and values in Australia differ from those elsewhere? How did Australian foresters and botanists come to see the age of the forests? Such intriguing and multiplying questions will be discussed for one day at the conference. Here are a few preliminary points which may be of interest.

Single and mixed age forests Many of the world's most productive and valuable species grow in stands which, resulting from fire or storm, are more or less even-aged. This applies to Douglas fir in the great forests of the Pacific Northwest, to karri in Western Australia, to Eucalyptus regnans and other ash-type species in the eastern States and to the araucarias in Queensland for example. Sharp contrasts are often apparent between 'old growth' and a 'second growth' regenerating after logging, or in the Victorian mountain ash forests, for example, between patches of trees over 250 years old, those dating from the 1851 and 1918 fires and the large areas of regrowth from the 1939 fire. At the other extreme are the tropical moist forests with their chaotic jumble of species and ages of trees, though they too may be striated by cyclones or fire and drastically altered by logging, so that they may be distinguished as 'primary' and 'secondary' forest. Many of Australia's mixed species hardwood forests appear to lie between these extremes.

Age in forestry Age is central to silviculture's idea of maturity, as time is to forest management's idea of sustainable yields from the forest as a whole. Silvicultural texts discuss age in terms of longevity, the point of physical maturity after which trees decay, and the much earlier point of economic maturity. Evelyn (1664) considers longevity in the classics and records some great English trees, mostly by their size and wood volume. In the European forestry tradition, Köstler (1956), for example, considers longevity by recording the ages of notable forest trees in various countries. In Australia, Jacobs (1955) follows this approach and cites Helms' (1945) measurements of a 400 year old Eucalyptus regnans, although it was size rather than age which has fascinated investigators of this species from Ferdinand von Mueller on (Moulds 1993). Köstler and Jacobs note that storms topple most trees well before they reach the maximum age which would be biologically

Age is the statistical variable which tables and formulae use to predict future yields of timber and sometimes water from even-aged forest and plantation stands. It can also be a proxy variable for other properties, notably timber quality, or an indicator for ecological maturity, the point at which the full assemblage of species is present in a stand.

Age as a cultural value The many cultural, religious and aesthetic values attributed to old trees and forests provide a rich field to be explored in the forest history conference. There is a wealth of international material, most recently provided abundantly in Schama's (1995) Landscape and memory. But how are these values held and how did they arise in Australia? Frawley (1994), Watson (1990) and others have started to consider such questions, but much further work is needed to elaborate the values held by different groups - by rural and urban people, for example.

'Old growth' term The origin of the term 'old growth' is more obscure than I had expected. From its current use in the Pacific Northwest of North America, I had assumed that it originated there and could be found in the standard US forest management textbooks (especially in relation to modifications to the standard yield regulation formulae to allow for non-normal forests with very old stands). To my surprise it does not appear in their indexes. For example, the giant compendium, Forestry handbook, sponsored by the Society of American Foresters does not include it, although it contains several yield tables for 'second growth' (Forbes 1961), while Chapman's standard text refers to the 'virgin forest' in his chapter on 'The regulation of wild forests' (Chapman 1950: ch.23). Although 'old growth' is usually applied to natural forests and implies age and a real or supposed lack of human disturbance, it has also been used to describe very old eucalypt plantations in India (Negi and others 1988).

I broadcast an inquiry on the Internet which elicited some interesting replies. One thought 'old growth' had gained prominence as a non-sexist alternative to virgin forest, others thought it had arisen in a logging context, which is reinforced by the earliest reference so far found which was in a 1931 edition of *The Timberman*. My inquiries are continuing, as they say.

My Internet inquiry stimulated a wider discussion of old growth forests which raised the question of whether there were any non-anthropogenic forests, apart from those on some islands as Richard Grove pointed out. It seems to come down to examining the balance between human and ecological factors.

Other terms 'Ancient' and 'primeval' are used to describe old forests, particularly in Europe and the tropics respectively. For example, Rackham's (1980) ecological history is of England's Ancient woodland, while scientific literature (reported in Forestry Abstracts) refers to the ancient forest of Bialowieza so eloquently discussed by Schama.

Labels and cultural icons Some of these terms seem to take on a life of their own not so much for some type of forest, but for a desired type of management and in places as an objective. There seems to be a transition from forest to label to cultural icon. There is a lot of Scandinavian interest in the question of the cultural importance of old forests which I will try and report in the next Newsletter. We will have plenty to explore in the conference!

References:

Chapman, H.H. 1950. Forest management. Bristol, Conn: Hildreth Press. Evelyn, J. (1664). Sylva or a discourse on forest trees. London: Martyn and Allestry.

Forbes, R.D.(ed.) 1961. Forestry handbook. New York: Ronald Press.
Frawley, K. 1994. Evolving visions: environmental management and nature conservation in Australia. In. Dovers, S.(ed.). Australian environmental history: essays and cases. Melbourne: OUP.

Helms, A.D. 1945. A giant eucalypt. Australian Forestry 9(1): 25-8. Jacobs, M.R. 1955. Growth habits of the eucalypts. Canberra: F&TB.

Moulds, F.R. 1993. Tall stories and tall trees. In Australia's ever-changing forests II (Dargavel, J. and Feary, S. eds). Canberra: CRES, ANU.

Negi, J.D.S., Sharma, S.c. and Bischt, A.P.S. 1988. Forest floor and soil nutrient inventories in an old-growth Eucalyptus plantation. *Indian Forester* 114(8): 453-61.

Rackham, O. 1980. Ancient woodland: its history, vegetation and uses in England. London: Edward Arnold.

Schama. S. 1995. Landscape and memory. London: Harper Collins. Watson, I. (1990). Fighting over the forests. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Research in progress

Ballarat and Creswick State Forest

Angela Taylor is working on a cultural biography of the Ballarat and Creswick State Forest as part of an MA in public history at Monash University. She completed a research paper on John La Gerche's role as Crown Lands Bailiff in former Ballarat and Creswick State Forest in the 1880s and '90s. The focus was on his establishment of the first nursery and plantation in Sawpit gully in what is now the Forestry School's Demonstration Forest. She was fortunate to come across La Gerche's pocket books which give a day-by-day account of a forester's work last century. They help to breathe life into the official account of the establishment of the Forest recorded in his letter books.

Administrative history of English forests

Sybil Jack, in the Department of History in the University of Sydney, is working on sixteenth and early seventeenth century administrative history of English forests. Forests at the time were essentially royal - indeed some held that there could not be a forest in private hands though that was manifestly inaccurate since several were. She has an article coming out in the Sussex Archeological Society's journal on the ecological destruction of one which was for a long time in private hands, St. Leonard's Forest.

Hardwood forest inventory in Western Australia

Martin Rayner, in the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management, has been working intermittently for some years on a study of how inventories of the forests were conducted. He hopes to publish in his Department's journal, *CALMScience*, later this year.

Commencing with some of the earliest accounts of the extent of the jarrah and karri forests by the colonial surveyors, this work identifies the various types of forest inventory that have been undertaken in WA to the present day. The chronology is valuable because forest inventories have been a key factor influencing decisions on land alienation for agriculture versus forest reservation, the granting of timber cutting rights and the overall level of timber harvest from the forest. There is also a fascinating human dimension to the work: few people realise, for example, that in the early 1920s most of the south-west forest was surveyed along gridlines 40 chains (800 metres) apart by hundreds of crews camping for up to several years in the bush.

Much of the source material for this type of research can only be accessed within Departmental archives and filing systems and through interviews with retired foresters. It is hoped that other personnel will take up the challenge to document, even briefly, the historical evolution of our knowledge about the forests.

New Zealand research

Mike Roche (Department of Geography, Massey University) has completed three more entries for the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography: Mary Sutherland (BFSci Bangor) who was employed by the New Zealand Forest Service in the 1920s; Leon McIntosh Ellis who was the first Director of Forests (1920-1928) and who finished his career in Australia as a consultant working for Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd; and Arnold Hansson, a Norwegian-trained forester, who was Chief Inspector of Forests (1920-1932). Mike is working on the current 'third afforestation boom' in New Zealand and is planning to work on the Trans-Tasman timber trade in the 1900s-1930s.

Oral history

Gregg Borschmann is currently editing his mammoth oral history collection of 80 life stories comprising 300 hours of audio tape and three million words of transcript. He anticipates at least another year's work until The people's forest: a living history of Australia's forests is ready for publication. He is also recording a second oral history collection, on Australia's environmental history, for the National Library.

Forest transition

The main objectives of an international project being run from the UK are to determine the progress and causative factors of the transition from shrinking to expanding forest areas in many developed countries, and to evaluate the prospects of the transition in developing countries. Cross-national models are being combined with national time-series studies to isolate the principal social, economic, political and demographic forces underlying the transition. The work is thus proceeding along three main complementary paths - substantive global models of the forest-change process, methodological aspects of global models, and national case studies. For the latter strand, to date it has examined four countries in detail - Italy, France, Portugal and Switzerland. These are nations that have undergone the transition and for which the relevant data are mostly available. The net is now being widened to include those countries for which data is

less readily available, which have undergone a more recent transition, or which have been widely studied elsewhere - UK, USA, Canada, Japan, Chile, Cuba, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, and so on. The first task for each country is to determine (to the nearest decade) when such a transition occurred. AFHS members interested in assisting this project should contact: Mr Coby L. Needle, Deptartment of Geography, University of Aberdeen, Elphinstone Road, Aberdeen AB9 2UF, Scotland.

e-mail: geo306@abdn.ac.uk

Forest history at the Gippsland Studies

As briefly noted in the last Newsletter, this Centre on the Churchill Campus of Monash University, has a collection on the history, Aborigines, environment and social sciences of Gippsland which includes published materials, photographs, maps and documents. Forest historians may find contextual information in out-ofprint local histories, unpublished reminiscences of timber workers and sawmillers, information on settlement patterns and post-war development. The Centre has an extensive photograph collection and holds many regional bulletins and newsletters. Most of the items have been indexed on the Centre's bibliographic database, Gippsdoc. The Centre is in touch with a network of Gippsland historical societies and local researchers.

The Centre supports teaching and research projects For example, recent postwithin the university. graduate research on the environmental history of the Gippsland Lakes has included a study of the vigorous wattle bark industry that existed around them.

The Centre produces a quarterly newsletter which keeps readers in touch with events in Gippsland and with new additions to the collection. The Centre also helps to produce the Gippsland Heritage Journal, one of Australia's few regional history journals.

The Centre is open to the general public Monday to Wednesday. For more information on the Centre and its forest history resources, contact:

Meredith Fletcher, Gippsland Studies Centre, Monash University, Churchill, Victoria 3842

tel: (051) 226356, fax: (051) 226359,

email: Meredith.Fletcher@ghss.cc.monash.edu.au

The next Newsletter

Please send details about your work in progress, new publications to be noted and requests for information.

Tramping along the corduroy highway

Some may 'surf the super highway', perhaps forest historians just tramp along the corduroyed bits. Remember the old handy hints section of the *Women's Weekly*? Well, this section of each Newsletter will be something like that with tips about useful or interesting things we find on our tramps. So write in - but sorry, you won't get 10/- for the best tip published!

ASAP - The Australian Science Archives Project runs a WWW (World Wide Web) site concerned with the history of science, technology and medicine. Its URP address is: http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au

The project is run by Tim Sherratt on behalf of a small non-profit organisation and has a Canberra office (Tel: 06 257 7985). It has 200 sources and 550 entries in its Biographical Dictionary. I searched it for 'forest' and found references to twenty Australian foresters from William Carron in the mid-nineteenth century to better know figures like Swain, Jolly, Lane-Poole and Jacobs. The entry for Perrin gave only a very partial coverage of his career, but I gather that the project would be open to amendments and corrections from AFHS members, so perhaps we can help. I was very glad to see that it included a good piece on the Australian Forest History Society taken from the History of Australian Science Newsletter.

The H-Net - Humanities on-line. This is a huge international network of 73 electronic discussion groups for historians and social scientists. Its groups are 'moderated' which means that an editor stops offensive or advertising material, or material not relevant to the topic, swamping the list. It is run through central 'servers' (computers which distribute files) in the USA. The groups which are likely to be of most interest to Australian forest historians are H-ANZAU (formerly H-NZ-OZ) which Australian and New Zealand history and H-ASEH which covers environmental history internationally. There has not been anything much on Australian forest history on either, but they are open to discussions which we might want to raise, or questions we might want to ask. To subscribe: send this one-line message to LISTSERV@msu.edu

SUBSCRIBE H-ANZAU Firstname Surname, Affiliation

or SUBSCRIBE H-ASEH Firstname Surname,
Affiliation

For 'affiliation' put the name of institution or society (abbreviate U. = University)

You will get a computer generated response, followed by a questionnaire. The editors will sign you up when you return it and the messages will subsequently arrive automatically in your computer mailbox.

Publications noted

Judith Bennett 1995. Forestry, public lands and the colonial legacy in Solomon Islands. *The Contemporary Pacific* 7(2):243-75.

This important paper is part of Judith Bennett's nearly completed, major study of the sad and sorry history of the Solomons forests which Australian and other firms have been logging since the 1920s. It concludes with an all too familiar message that 'the colonial and independent governments have both been shortsighted regarding control of the forest resource'.

Jane Carruthers 1995. The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 170+x pp.R47.95 (Univ. of Natal Press, fax: +27 331 2605599).

This is a book about much more than the Kruger National Park. It is both scholarly and very exciting, exploring the political and social dimensions of utilitarian conservation in a place where 'the national parks idea' is strongly linked to Afrikaner nationalism and the dislocation of black African traditional land users.

The dimension of 'game management', and its links with aristocratic and imperial hunting traditions are much more relevant in the context of African fauna than for Australian marsupials - kangaroo shooting has never really been regarded as a 'status sport'! In Southern Africa, however, the concept of game has been hotly contested by the different sectional interest groups, and the debates have continued well into the twentieth century, as Carruthers shows. In Australia, 'game' laws were a predominantly nineteenth century phenomenon, and often focused on acclimatized rather than indigenous species. The aims of national parks and reserves in Australia were rather different, with more focus on forests and less on 'ideal' fauna (e.g. antelope, then later, lion).

Carruthers is sensitive to the ways in which 'wilderness' ideals have been manipulated in the construction of Kruger National Park over the past 100 years, and this is very relevant to Australians concerned with forest and ecosystem conservation. Her work debunks the myth that conservation is a

^{*} For the benefit of our vast international readership, a 'corduroy' road was one with poles and sticks laid across the direction of travel.

moral imperative. It is neither apolitical nor always right. In her chapter on 'the other side of the fence' which deals with Africans and the national park, she demonstrates the elitist, imperialist and oppressive dimensions of the conservation imperative. It is a book with relevance in Australia where World Heritage Areas and national parks are increasingly located in places where traditional indigenous land use occurs.

Forest historians in Australia are unlikely to come across this book by accident, but it is well worth the search.

Tom Griffiths 1996. Hunters and collectors: the antiquarian imagination in Australia. Cambridge University Press. 416 pages. \$34.95.

Partly a collective biography of amateur scientists and humanists forgotten by history, Hunters and collectors looks at how these people influenced popular perceptions of the past. It shows how they distanced themselves from Aboriginal people and their culture, but were haunted by them. It also considers the rise of professional history, anthropology and archeology in the universities, which ignored the efforts of amateurs. This nineteenth century search for an Australian past prefigures much current historical consciousness. In this context the book looks at contemporary issues such as the rise of the heritage movement, debates about restoration of Aboriginal sites and artifacts in post-Mabo Australia, the changing role of museums and environmental Hunters and collectors raises wide questions which give forest historians much to reflect on. The 'History and natural history' chapter contains an interesting discussion of the notion of 'wilderness' and the denigration of Aboriginal and historic heritage in the process preserving natural heritage.

Mathew Higgins. 1995. Bulls Head and the Arboreta. National Trust of Australia (ACT), PO Box 3173, Manuka, ACT 2603. Transcripts of interviews pp.460 illustrated. Black and white \$45, colour \$85 plus postage.

Mathew Higgins has completed an oral history project (funded under the National Estate Grants program) which records the experience of various individuals in two aspects of forestry in the Brindabella Ranges of the ACT. One concerns hardwood logging and bushfire prevention and the other trials of various softwoods in a number of arboreta. Higgins has made other studies of people in the region and reports are available from the Trust.

Norman Houghton 1995. *The Beechy*. Light Railways Research Society of Australia. (N.Houghton, PO Box 1128, Geelong, Vic. \$30 incl. postage).

The Beechy is the latest in the series of regional transport and sawmilling histories written by members of the LRRSA. It covers the Beech Forest area of the West Otways in Victoria. It is based on the rugged field surveys that Norm Houghton described so vividly at the AFHS Creswick conference. These have been accompanied by oral histories of people involved in the timber industry and a thorough search of official railway and other public records, and newspaper sources.

Geoff Park 1995. Nga Uruora/The groves of life: ecology and history in the New Zealand Landscape. Wellington: Victoria University Press.

We hope to carry a review of this lovely book in our next issue. It offers a fresh perspective on New Zealand landscapes and the human relationships with them

International journals

Despite our remonstrances about its confusing title, Environmental History has now replaced Forest and Conservation History (formerly the Journal of Forest History) produced by the Forest History Society (USA) and Environmental History Review produced by the American Society for Environmental History. The good news for Australian readers is that the reviews and extensive bibliography which were carried in Forest and Conservation History will be continued in the new journal. We hope to receive the first issue shortly. The Forest History Society is now putting out a short annual publication, Forest History Today, which contains a mix of short, popular articles on US topics with the Society's annual report and newsletter items.

Meanwhile, Environment and History - the UK published journal - is going from strength to strength with better production and a range of scholarly papers of wider interest to Australian readers. The first issue for 1996 includes 'The two cultures revisited: environmental history and the environmental sciences' by Donald Worster who argues that environmental history provides an opportunity to bridge the gap between the 'two cultures' of science and of the arts and humanities. He also argues that it requires each culture to be more understanding of the other; a case which the membership and meetings of the AFHS have surely supported. Two other papers of particular interest are one on the different strands of ideas in

classical European forestry which still echo in current Australian debates on forestry, and another by A.R. Main from the University of WA who argues that the pre-human history of the Australian environment - a 'ghost from the past' - must be recognised 'before an adequate environmental history of the biota can be established'. Subscription details are available from:

Environmental History: Forest History Society, 701 Vickers Ave., Durham, NC 27701, USA. Environment and History: White Horse Press, 1 Strond, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UD, UK.

Forthcoming Australian conferences

Australian Historical Association 14-17 July 1996, Melbourne Contact: Andrew Markus, Dept. of History, Monash University (Clayton campus).

The scientific savant in nineteenth century Australia: a celebration of the life, times and legacy of Ferdinand von Mueller 29 September - 1 October 1996, Melbourne

Contact: Dr T.J. Entwisle, Royal Botanic Gardens,
Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, Vic. 3141
Tel: (03) 655 2300 Fax (03) 655 2350
email Entwisle@botany.unimelb.edu.au

Australia's ever-changing forests III 24-27 November 1996, Jervis Bay

Forthcoming international conferences

Multiple use forestry from the past to present times 2-4 May 1996, Gmunden am Traunsee, Austria IUFRO Forest History Group Contact: Dr Elisabeth Johann, Wlassakstr. 56, A-1130 Wein, Austria (Tel/Fax 04226216)

Advances in forest and woodland history
2-6 September 1996, Nottingham, UK
Forest Ecology Group of British Ecological Society
Contact: Charles Watkins, (Fax 0115 951 5249)

Ecology and Empire
19-20 September 1996, London, UK
Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies,
28 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DS UK
Contact: Libby Robin e-mail: lrobin@sas.ac.uk
or fax: +44 1 71 580 9627

Environmental history of Africa mid-1997, Zomba, Malawi IUFRO Forest History Group and International Environmental History Association Contact: Richard Grove: rgrove@uncecs.edu

Membership subscription for the calendar year 1996

Name

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Address:

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Field of interest in forest history:

Please mail to: John Dargavel, 20 Laidley Place, Florey, ACT 2615 with \$15 cheque or postal order for 1996 subscription (Overseas \$A20).

Reminders!! Please renew you subscription if you have not already done so. Please send title and short paragraph describing the paper or short presentation you would like to offer to the conference



