



AUSTRALIAN
Forest History
SOCIETY

Newsletter no. 13

July 1996

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

WIDENING INTEREST IN OUR FOREST HISTORY

The Australian Forest History Society was set up in 1988 as a network which could enable people interested in the history of Australia's forests to communicate with each other. At the time, there were not many people actively working in the field, they were scattered around the country, and came from different walks of life and disciplines. The Society wished to make its existence and endeavours better known, to which end it sent complimentary copies of its newsletters to libraries and organisations likely to be interested. It was fortunate in its early years in receiving considerable administrative support from the Department of Geography and Oceanography of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, and from the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies in the Australian National University.

Our third conference, to be held in Jervis Bay in November, will be able to celebrate a remarkable increase of interest in Australia's forest history. Of course, much of that is now being driven by the public policies arising from the environmental debate of the last few years. Tracing the history of logging and other 'disturbances' has preoccupied public agencies engaged in the various regional assessments, but their interest is also widening to give more attention to Aboriginal, cultural and historic values.

It is good to report that many new people with a wide range of interests have joined the Society recently. The Society has been primarily interested in the forests of Australia, but in our first two conferences has widened its interest to Ateoroa/New Zealand. Papers from a still wider region have been offered -and welcomed - to our coming conference.

Registration form for the November conference enclosed

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Forest assessment

One of the interesting themes to be emerging in Australian forest history concerns how the knowledge of the forest was gradually built up. Until surprisingly late, foresters were discovering and sketch-mapping the basic topographic features of great areas of the country as much as they were looking at the trees. For example, the Tasmanian state archives contain records of an exploration by forest inspector Garrett through NW Tasmania in the 1930s which took some weeks and on which the party nearly died.

Jim McKinty, a retired Victorian forester, has written a family memoir of his forest surveying days in the East Gippsland mountains in the 1940s. His comment that the 1870 map that he was working from 'did not show the Skene Branch as a river separate from the East and West Barklay Rivers' reveals the fundamental level at which foresters were working.

The sheer distances covered on the old strip surveys which were run on parallel straight lines through the forest irrespective of topography are another story. One year the survey crews in Queensland went further than the distance travelled by Burke and Wills! As noted in *Newsletter 12*, the old strip survey records in Western Australia are being re-examined to estimate the past condition of the karri forest.

Work in progress

Eucalypt flowering

Marie Keatley is working on how eucalypt flowering is affected by seasonal climate and other factors (phenology) in the Maryborough region. The earliest published mention she has been able to find on the perplexing nature of eucalypt flowering is 1893. She was fortunate enough to gain access to the diaries kept by a dedicated forest overseer for the years 1940 to 1961 which recorded flowering. She also has his Forests Commission records of budding and flowering up to the middle of 1962 and the years up to 1978 are covered by Forests Commission records. Her work is in a long tradition as the study of phenology was outlined by Linnaeus in 1751 and the mathematical models she is using in her postgraduate research at Melbourne University have a history dating back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Red gum

Garry Kerr in Portland is investigating the uses of red gum timber and changes in the forests. He writes: 'My family were farmers who cleared forests and

lived close to forests. My grandfather used to shepherd sheep in the forest when he was young, about the 1890s, and yard them to keep them from the dingoes. Sheep would thrive in the open understorey then, where you would not feed a rabbit today because of the thickening scrub.' These changes are due to changes in the fire and grazing regimes, but it is unclear why Aboriginal 'fire-stick farming' did not germinate seed in the same way.

Tasmanian Forestry Commission. Simon Cubit is working on a history of the Forestry Commission of Tasmania and its predecessor, the Department of Forestry. Tasmania was the last State to set up a forest service when it established its Department in 1920. The Commission was set up in 1946 after a Royal Commission had found that the Minister for Forestry, T. D'Alton, had accepted bribes from the mainland timber merchants, E.A. Alstergren and W.G. Nosworthy.

Tramping along the corduroy highway (or how forest historians 'surf the super-highway')

Australia's Forests on-line. The Australian Environmental Resource Information Network (ERIN) is expanding rapidly, giving more information about our forests and providing links to other web pages. It is definitely the best site from which to start a forest tramp. You can start at the top level of ERIN (at: <http://www.erin.gov.au>) and get all sorts of stuff about policy, oceans, air, etc., but you need to tramp across the friendly 'land' to get to the forests (at: <http://www.erin.gov.au/land/forests/forests.html>). When you get there you can choose which track to follow depending whether you are interested in particular 'regions', 'people and places', 'managing our forests', or other areas.

Forest conferences. Part of ERIN has a list of national and international forest conferences. Thanks to Don Glasco, ours will soon be included (at: <http://www.erin.gov.au/land/forests/conferences.html>).

Funet: the forest science discussion. This bulletin board is run out of the Finnish Forest Research Institute. It deals mostly with current forest science and forestry matters, but occasionally has some material of historical interest. It carried some of the discussion on old growth reported in our last Newsletter. To join Funet, send a one-line message: SUBSCRIBE FOREST <first name> <last name> to mailserver@nic.funet.fi You will get an acknowledgement and a few messages almost every day from all round the world.

Australian Forest History Society

Australia's ever-changing forests III

Third national conference on Australia's forest history

Jervis Bay, 24-28 December 1996

Indicative Programme

Sunday, 24 November

	University of Canberra Field Studies Station
4.00 p.m. on-	Registration
7.00 p.m.	Evening meal
Evening	Informal social

Monday, 25 November

	ANPWS Training Room
8.30 a.m.	Opening
8.45 a.m.-4.30 p.m.	Workshop 'Concepts of forest age' (including lunch, morning and afternoon tea)
6.00 p.m.-8.30 p.m.	Dolphin watch cruise on Jervis Bay with dinner on board

Tuesday, 26 November

	ANPWS Training Room
8.30 a.m.-2.30	3 sessions of papers (including lunch and morning tea)
3.30 p.m.-	Excursion to Currumben and Tomerong State Forests
7.30 p.m.	Dinner in University of Canberra Field Studies Station

Wednesday, 27 November

	ANPWS Training Room
8.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m.	2 sessions of papers AFHS General business meeting Review of public history (including lunch, morning and afternoon tea)
5.00 - 9.00 p.m.	National Botanical Gardens Discussion of Aboriginal co-management Barbeque

Thursday, 28 November

8.00 a.m.	Check out from University of Canberra Field Studies Station
8.30 a.m.-4.00 p.m.	Excursion to Beecroft Peninsular, old heathlands and old Banksia forest.
4.00 a.m.	Depart in time for return to Canberra and Sydney by 7.00 p.m.

Australian Heritage Commission consultancy

The questions we raise in our workshop on concepts of forest age are of great interest to the Australian Heritage Commission because it has responsibility for assessing the National Estate values of the forests. Happily, the interests of the Commission have converged with those of the Australian National University and the Australian Forest History Society in a consultancy which the University is undertaking for the Commission, the results of which will be presented at the workshop. (As the AFHS is not a legally constituted body, it can not enter into such agreements). John Dargavel and Tim Bonyhady are supervising the project for the University and drawing on AFHS members and others to complete it.

The study requires an overview paper to be written after the conference which draws together the generic themes about the concept of forest age which emerge from all the workshop papers. This will be accompanied by five of the workshop papers about Australian experiences. A concluding paper will relate all the material to National Estate values. The final document is to be completed by the end of January and will be published by the Commission. The consultancy is enabling the content of the workshop to be strengthened and the Commission publication of forest history material is to be welcomed.

Conference papers and publications

So far, twenty-six people have responded to the call for papers. As with previous conferences, the topics cover a fascinatingly wide range of topics, so we will have a very busy and interesting conference. The conference programme will include a one-page abstract of every paper. If authors wish to distribute their papers at the conference, they should bring 60 copies with them.

It is anticipated that the majority of papers to the conference (i.e. except the five to be published by the Australian Heritage Commission) will be published jointly by the Society and the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies at ANU who published the proceedings of our previous conference, *Australia's ever-changing forests II*. CRES has a substantial publishing programme in resource and environmental topics and maintains a direct sales and distribution operation.

Everyone attending the conference will receive *both* the consultancy report with the five Australian workshop papers published by the AHC *and* the main conference proceedings published by CRES. The cost of these is included in the registration fee.

Timetable

Registration	31 October at latest. <u>Please note that as the conference meeting room will only accommodate approximately 50 people, it is possible that we may not be able to accept all registrations. Registrations will be accepted strictly in the order received.</u>
Guidelines to authors	Mail out in July
One-page abstracts	31 October at latest for all papers.
Workshop papers	31 October - one hard copy.
All papers	24 November - two hard copies and computer disc.
Note:	17 July-18 August John Dargavel will be on holiday.

Jervis Bay

Jervis Bay is located 180 kilometres by road south of Sydney and 285 kilometres from Canberra. The State of New South Wales surrounds the small Commonwealth Territory of Jervis Bay which occupies 7400 hectares at the southern end of the Bay. The Territory includes a nature reserve, a marine park, an Aboriginal settlement at Wreck Bay, part of the National Botanic Gardens, and a naval college. New South Wales has declared the Gurumbi Nature Reserve and national parks surrounding the Bay.

The small town of Huskisson and townships of Vincentia and Hyams Beach front the Bay. Nowra is the nearest major town. The conference base is at the University of Canberra's Field Studies Station which is located 10 minutes walk from Jervis Bay village. The conference sessions will be held in the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service's Training Room in the Visitor Information Centre which is located at the park entrance, 3 kilometres from the Field Station.

Accommodation

University of Canberra, Field Studies Station

The Field Studies Station has simple student-type accommodation with 24 bedrooms each equipped with 1 double bunk bed, mattresses, pillows and blankets, table and chairs. People staying there have to bring their own linen, or sleeping bag, and towel. Booking can be made with conference registration. There are two kitchen/common rooms where we can make our own breakfasts. Simple cereals, bread, butter, jam, tea and coffee will be provided, but more luxurious fare should be brought. The Station has a central Dining/Teaching Room which will be our venue for dinner on the Sunday and Tuesday nights.

Motels and holiday units The area is well supplied with motels and serviced units within a few kilometres of the conference venue. Contact your motoring organisation or the Shoalhaven Tourist Bureau for details. Bookings should be made directly. The small Dolphin Shores motel at Vincentia (044 416 895) is closest. The ★★★ Huskisson Beach Motel overlooking the Bay (Tel: 044 416 387) offers delegates a room only, twin share rate of \$50. Mention the AFHS rate when booking.

Camping There are two camp sites near the beach in the National Park within 3-4 kilometres of the conference venue. Bookings should be made with the Park Service Tel: 044 430 977.

Travel

Mini-bus from Canberra We will run a mini-bus from Canberra on the Sunday afternoon, returning on Thursday after the conference. It may be necessary to make a charge for this.

Car pool from Canberra and Sydney We will endeavour to put those needing transport in touch with those with spare seats in their cars.

Rail from Sydney Weekday trains run from Sydney to Bomaderry with bus connections over the Shoalhaven River to Nowra. Weekend services are almost non-existent. We will endeavour to collect anyone coming by rail. Check times with the State Rail Authority of NSW.

Greyhound Pioneer coach Greyhound run a coach route along the Princes Highway. We will endeavour to collect anyone coming by coach, preferably from the Jervis Bay road turnoff, or from Nowra.

Air Charter flights can be arranged with Vee H. Aviation at Fairburn Airport, Canberra (Tel: 06 248 6766) to the Royal Australian Naval airfield which is just over 1 kilometre from the Field Station. Landing permission must be obtained from the air station, HMAS Albatross (Tel: 044 211 211).

Local facilities

Shops There is a supermarket with take-away food and petrol at the Village, large general stores at Hyams Beach (7 km) and Erwall Bay (10 km), and a range of shops at Huskisson including a chemist.

Telephone There is a public telephone near the supermarket where a phone card can be used. Note: neither the Field Station nor the APNWS Visitors Centre have facilities to receive regular incoming calls for conference delegates. *Emergency* incoming calls can be made to the Field Centre's caretaker, Mr Rycroft, during business hours on 044 421 144, or the ANPWS Visitor Information Centre 044 430 977.

Photocopying No facilities available.

Park use fee

The Field Station is not part of the National Park, but it is necessary to travel through the park to get to the Station. A Park Use Fee of \$5 per car per week is payable for those who wish to venture into the park by vehicle. If you go from the Field Station for a swim on the beach you enter and use the park.



The past is always altered for motives that reflect present needs. We reshape our heritage to make it attractive in modern terms; we seek to make it part of ourselves, and ourselves part of it; we conform it to our self-images and aspirations. Rendered grand or homely, modified or tarnished, history is continually altered in our private interests or on behalf of our community or country.

David Lowenthal. 1985. *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge University Press, p.348.



Publications noted

Alex Graeme-Evans. 1996. *Against the odds: Risby's: Tasmanian pioneers 1826-1995*. Hobart: Tasbook (distributed by Regal Publications, 24 Wellington St., Launceston). 420 pp. \$32.95.

This detailed and extensively illustrated account documents the history of one of Australia's longest-lasting, family-owned timber companies which started Tasmania's first steam sawmill in 1844. We plan to carry a review in the next issue.

Sue Rosen. 1996. *Losing ground*. Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger. 200 pp. \$29.95.

This environmental history of the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment covers the period from 1788 to the 1990s and considers the effects of agriculture, infrastructure, urbanisation and Sydney's demands for water on the health of the river.

D.G. Ryan, J.E. Ryan and B.J. Starr. (n.d.). *The Australian landscape: observations of explorers and early settlers*. Wagga Wagga: Murumbidgee Catchment Management Committee (c/o Agricultural Research Institute, PMB Pine Gully Road, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2650). 20 pp.

This publication is an annotated collection of quotations mostly concerning fire and its fashioning of the forest landscape. It is fully referenced and provides an accessible introduction to the topic. We hope that other regions will follow Murumbidgee's lead and include a historical dimension in their work.



Mark Elvin. *Pine tree*

We are always delighted to welcome new members to the Society. The range of interests, knowledge and talents represented in our membership is amazing. Those who attended our first Australian forest history conference will remember Andrew Lo's delightful exhibition of Chinese brush paintings of Australian flora and his demonstrations of that method. Now Mark Elvin has provided one of his small paintings in another Chinese style. Unfortunately, this reduced reproduction can not do it justice. He is an expert in ancient Chinese history at the Australian National University with a particular interest in long-term environmental change. He has settled in Australia and has a bush property near Tarago in New South Wales.

Forthcoming Australian conferences

*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) 9655 2300 Fax: (03) 9655 2350
email: Entwisle@botany.unimelb.edu.au

Australia's ever-changing forests III
24-27 November 1996, Jervis Bay
Australian Forest History Society
Contact: John Dargavel, 20 Laidley Place, Florey,
ACT 2615 (Tel/Fax 06 258 9102)

Forthcoming international conferences

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 Email: lrobin@sas.ac.uk

Environmental history of Africa
mid-1997, Zomba, Malawi
Contact: Richard Grove: rgrove@uncces.edu

Membership subscription for 1996

The Society is open to all who support its objective which is '... to advance historical understanding of human interactions with Australian forest and woodland environments.' New members will be welcomed and existing members are asked to make the Society known to all who might be interested.

Name:

Organisation (if any):

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

email:

Field of interest in forest history:

Please mail cheque or money order (made payable to the 'Australian Forest History Society') to: John Dargavel, 20 Laidley Place, Florey, ACT 2615 with \$15 cheque or postal order for 1996 subscription (Overseas \$20).

Reminders !! Send your conference registration in early, or you might miss out!

Items for the *Newsletter* are sought, particularly about work in progress, new publications, and information needed.

Subscriptions are for the calendar year.

Note

The Editor will be eating sausage in Bologna, drinking riesling on the Rhine and warm bitter in England until mid-August after which correspondence will again be entered into!

