



AUSTRALIAN
Forest History
SOCIETY Inc.

Newsletter no. 23

October 1999

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

MEETINGS AND PLANS

Annual General Meeting—Friday, 19 November, in Canberra

The inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in April. The AGM for the current financial year will be held in Canberra on 19 November. Details, nomination and proxy voting forms are mailed with this newsletter.

The 'Perfumed Pineries' conference

Plans are advancing for a conference and publication on the history of the Callitris forests of New South Wales and Queensland. We think that Harold Swain once called them the 'perfumed pineries'. The conference is being organised jointly by the Society, The Australian National University and Macquarie University. It will be held in Coonabarabran (NSW) in November 2000 with two days of papers and a field tour to the Pilliga forest. It will mark the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the first book on Australian forest history, Eric Rolls' *Million Wild Acres*.

Our own web site—volunteers needed!

The Society will have its own web site and email address as soon as it can be set up. We have applied to register our own domain name in the '.org' series which means that we could move from platform to platform without changing our address if necessary. We need volunteers to prepare text and other material and to construct the site itself. Selecting the links to be made to other sites will also be an important task.

Oooooops!

In *Newsletter 22* there were two unfortunate mistakes for which we apologise. First, we left out Jenny Mills' name from the list of people elected to the Committee. Second, we made the silly mistake on page 5 of saying that 'one super foot of sawn timber is a piece one foot long, one foot wide and one *foot* thick'. It is of course one *inch* thick. Many thanks to Garry Kerr who spotted the latter mistake.

Editors: John Dargavel, 20 Laidley Place, Florey, ACT 2615 Tel/Fax (02) 6258 9102 Email dargavel@spirit.com.au
Caroline Polak Scowcroft, 537 Cordova St, Winnipeg, MB R3N 1A8 Canada Email tenby@mts.net

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Sleeper cutting, East Gippsland, ca. 1960s. by David Parnaby.

This ink drawing was done by David Parnaby, a forester, in the 1970s and I believe it was published in the Victorian State Foresters Newsletter at the time. It was done while he was stationed at Cann River, or some short time afterwards. I have obtained David's permission to use it in the Newsletter.

Norm Endacott

News of members

We welcome Rosalind Hunter-Anderson (working in Guam), Peter MacFie, Kevin Palisi and Andrew Winter to the Society.

Libby Robin will be taking up a research position in the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies in The Australian National University in October.

Work In Progress

Garry Kerr: Huon pinning and the piners in Tasmania.

Harry McDermott of Strahan on the west coast of Tasmania and I are researching a book which is intended to be a history of Huon pinning and the piners who logged the west coast rivers, most notably the Gordon. We are covering the full history of the industry from the first white settlement in 1803 until the present time.

Traditionally, pinning has been an amphibious operation for there are no roads into the wilderness where the Huon pine grows. As the rivers and creeks were the piners' highways and service roads, they developed a rowing boat of 14 to 18 feet (4.3-5.5 m) in length, which has become known as a pinner's punt. They would row these boats, filled with gear and supplies, for up to 50 miles (80 km) to where they were working. Huon pine floats very readily when green, which meant that logs were floated down to the lower reaches of the Gordon, where they were made up into rafts to be towed to Strahan mills.

Harry McDermott is the great grandson of Thomas Doherty who began pinning in 1849. The Dohertys became the largest family of piners in the rivers. Harry's knowledge of West Coast history is considerable. Where possible, oral accounts by old piners of work practices and living conditions upriver are being used and will account for well over half the content of the book. We expect to have 300 or more photos.

We are finishing the book with a chapter on dendrochronology. Mike Peterson, of Forests Tasmania, is supplying information on work he is doing with American dendrochronologists on Huon pine. Very old logs, some dating back 27,000 years, have been uncovered in silted creek beds in the Stanley River area of N.W. Tasmania. Enough logs have been recovered to give an almost unbroken and overlapping series of annual growth rings dating back 10,000 years. These are giving valuable information on climate and other environmental factors that have

occurred over the period. Mike has core sampled a living Huon pine in the Gordon River area which is ten feet (3 m) in diameter and believed to be 3400 years old.

(Note: Garry's book, *The Tasmanian Trading Ketch*, first published in 1989 was reprinted in 1998. It contains details about the transport of timber—*Ed.*)

Mike McCarthy: Warburton sawmilling

I'm pleased to report that the manuscript was completed (to first draft stage) three weeks ago. It is now into the editing, design and production of graphics stage. It is targeted for publishing in November 2000. It gives me about a year to get it right!

The book covers the Sawmilling industry at Warburton from 1880 to the present day. However, the post-WWII mills are given only a fairly cursory coverage because logs were by then being transported from virtually anywhere in the state. The book (145,000 words) concentrates mainly on the era during which the Warburton forest itself was logged. The geographical coverage of the manuscript includes the Warburton, Millgrove and Wesburn districts. Typical of a LRRSA book it describes what might be called 'the tail' rather than 'the dog'. The focus is on the tramway systems that featured so strongly, but the mills, technology, economic and social aspects of the industry are covered extensively as well.

Questions

Andrew Loynes: Deforestation in the Ballarat-Creswick region?

I am an honours student from Melbourne/Ballarat university and am currently in the process of gathering information for my thesis, that being 'A history of the deforestation of the Ballarat-Creswick region'. Fortunately for myself, someone at the 'School of Forestry' (Melbourne University at Creswick, Vic), alerted my attention to the Australian Forest History Society. I am enquiring as to whether members may have some information or ideas regarding the deforestation of the region. I am particularly interested in the rate, method and reasons for land clearing. I would greatly appreciate any assistance.

Contact: Telephone (03) 53 332 808

51 Loch Ave, Ballarat (Vic) 3350;

E-mail: davidb@netconnect.com.au

Norman Endacott: The phantom consultant?

Those familiar with Victoria's forest history will know about the terrible plundering of the more accessible forests during the second half of the nineteenth century. This was accompanied by considerable *angst* on the part of parliament, government, press and community leaders. Prolonged but ineffectual breast-beating eventually gave rise to the employment of two forest consultants from the Indian Forest Service—F.D'A. Vincent (1887) and B. Ribbentrop (1895).

Vincent was unrestrained in his criticisms, so much so that his report was never published. Ribbentrop said the same things, but in more diplomatic language. The upshot was the Royal Commission of 1897 which published its report in 1901. Its major recommendations were accepted, resulting in the passing of the 1907 Forest Act, the creation of a Department of State Forests in 1908 and the establishment of the Victorian School of Forestry in 1910.

Josiah Semmens was one of the early foresters who had charge of various forest districts from the 1890s onwards. In perusing his diaries (in the E.J. Semmens papers held by Melbourne University Archives) I stumbled on an interesting loose paper—a circular postcard from A.W. Crooke, Acting Conservator of Forests, addressed to Josiah Semmens, Forester, Maryborough. It read:

...the Minister has appointed Mr Tatham, late of the Indian Forest Service, to inquire into the present system of forestry in Victoria, to examine various forests and report on an improved system...

It goes on to ask the recipients to give Mr Tatham whatever assistance he may require in his field inspections.

It raises intriguing questions because the date of the communication was 9 September 1903. This was in the period between the Royal Commission report and the successful passing of the 1907 Forests Act. Surely everything needing to be said about Victoria's dismal forestry record had already been said *ad nauseum*. The way ahead was clear and planning under way. Why was another consultant necessary?

I have been unable to find any other reference to the elusive Mr Tatham. What were his terms of reference? Was his consultancy aborted? If not, was a report produced? Any information or suggestions would be appreciated.

Contact: 50 Highfield Av., Warranwood, Vic 3134;
Tel: (03) 9879 9262

and Answers

Harold Swain in New Zealand (?): From John Huth in reply to the query in Newsletter 22

In August, I visited Mr Foote, E.H.F. Swain's son-in-law. He says that Swain did not go to New Zealand. He said that Nancy Foote (Swain's daughter) never talked about Swain going to New Zealand.

And from Kevin Frawley:

The note about Swain going to New Zealand comes from his records/writing, but it is curious that he says nothing further about it which is unusual for Swain.

Aborigines and timber drive techniques for falling: From Brett Stubbs in reply to John Kerr's query in Newsletter 22

The earliest record I have of this technique of land clearance is Peter Cunningham's description of the process in his 'Two Years in New South Wales', 1827 (and mentioned in my paper on ringbarking in *Environment and History*, vol. 4.2, last year). It was used in scrub/brush clearance in the northern rivers of NSW last century, but more commonly the brush was just cleared of entangling vines and small undergrowth and, after drying for a while, was simply burnt. The heat of the fire was enough to kill the large trees which then fell/decayed over a period of several years. The drive was more labour intensive so perhaps was used only by wealthier land owners. I certainly don't have many contemporary accounts of drives in this region, compared to the other technique described. Your Maryborough reference is therefore of interest to me.

There is a story (which I cannot vouch for) of a 40 acre patch of brush near Alstonville being cleared by a single drive around the turn of the century.

Ken Hall (died 1994) made an action movie called 'Tall Timbers' in 1937 about two rival timber companies (Cinesound Productions, Sydney). An enormous drive in tall hardwood forest is one of the highlights of the film. It was actually filmed using a model of a forest, but is quite something given the age of the film. I recollect that the story was set on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, so it is probably not the same film which John D. referred to.

Regarding Aboriginal involvement in land clearance, many were employed by the settlers/selectors to clear the brush on the Clarence River (at least) in the mid-late 1800s. As with ringbarking, they would appear to have been employing a technique introduced to them by the white settlers, not vice versa. I am interested in tracing the origin of land clearance techniques in colonial Australia and suspect some had their origin in west coast USA.

Publications noted

Peter Holzworth (In press) *Monarchs of the woods: the story of Hoop pine from settlement to the present*. Brisbane: Department of Primary Industry—Forestry. 120pp. ISBN 0 7345 0056 4. \$19.95 + \$5.00 postage from the Department, GPO Box 944 Brisbane, Queensland 4001.

It is at the printers and on every forest historian's Christmas list! Watch the next Newsletter for more details. We have requested fliers and order forms to distribute to members.

Hager, N. and Burton, B. 1999 *Secrets and Lies, The anatomy of an Anti-Environmental PR Campaign*. Craig Potten Publishing, Nelson, New Zealand.

Discusses State-Owned-Enterprise Timberlands PR campaign regarding sustainable management of Westland's indigenous forests.

Bird, W 1999 *Viaducts Against the Sky, The Story of Port Craig*. Craig Printing, Invercargill. \$39.95

The story of one of the more remote timber milling ventures in the south Island of New Zealand.

David Cameron 1999. *Battling the Brigalow: a contextual thematic overview history of the forested areas of the southern Brigalow Belt Region, 1827-1999*. Biodiversity Planning Unit, Environmental Protection Agency—Queensland (PO Box 155, Brisbane Albert Street, Qld 4002), 157pp.

This is the report of an extensive survey of historic heritage sites in a very large region of southern Queensland lying west of the south-east Queensland RFA region. The region contains 2.6 million hectares of the State's 3.8 million ha of state forests as well as the majority of the State's cypress pine forests. The report follows the pattern of work in the south-east region.

Recent Journals

Environment and History 5(2), June 1999

The latest issue to arrive has several articles of interest to Australian forest historians. Phil McManus from the University of Newcastle has a paper looking at the forest histories on Australia and British Columbia and considering the place of Actant-Network theory. A paper on the place of Sir George Stapleton (1882-1960) in Britain alerts us to the importance of movements to re-vitalise rural Britain between the wars. Agricultural improvement was linked to social improvement. The paper sees his respect for the land as being echoed by later-day eco-centrics. One wonders how far his ideas were reflected in the forestry settlement schemes and whether they might be reflected in Australia if

McManus' approach was taken. Another paper by Annika Dahlberg and Piers Blaikie asks the excellent question of whether changes occurred in the landscape or in the interpretations of it. They look at climatic changes and cycles in relation to agriculture. Although their case concerns Botswana, their question is appropriate and timely here.

Environmental History 4(2) April 1999

The four major papers in this issue are devoted to Africa. Sarah Phillips' paper, 'Lessons from the Dust Bowl: Dryland Agriculture and Soil Erosion in the United States and South Africa, 1900-1950' is probably the one of greatest interest to Australian readers. As usual, the extensive review section is a most important resource for environmental historians everywhere. Several of the 20 books reviewed are collections of essays dealing with themes of theoretical and general interest.

Light Railways 149 October 1999

This issue has an important article by Bob McKillop on Mining Railways at Cobar, 1875-1889. It is part of a larger project to 'interpret how railways shaped the economic and social history of the Orana region of New South Wales. The copper mines needed great quantities of firewood from the surrounding forests. Although tramways were built, horses were still needed to bring the wood to the railhead but this made supplies unreliable. In times of drought, the carters could not get feed but when it rained, their drays got bogged. The story complements the social history of the firewood cutting and woodlines in the Kalgoorlie region told by Bill Bunbury in *Timber for Gold* (Fremantle Arts Press 1997).

Web sites

H-ANZAU

The homepage for H-ANZAU has moved. The new address is: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~anzau/>

The page looks the same and works in the same way, and you can still check the logs. So if you have it bookmarked, you will need to update it.

New site for New Zealand history

NZHistory.net.nz is a new web site focusing exclusively on New Zealand history. The site is a gateway for all information relating to New Zealand history, and provides up-to-the-minute material on a range of historical topics. NZHistory.net.nz is for students, teachers and practitioners of NZ history, as well as for those simply interested in New Zealand's past. NZHistory.net.nz:

- runs exhibitions on aspects of NZ history;
- announces conferences, new books, and events in NZ history;
- provides links to New Zealand libraries, university history departments, archives, museums, publishers, historical research institutions and historical associations;
- offers a discussion list on NZ history;
- provides links to international history sources and sites;
- runs an online challenge; and
- Provides a link to the Heritage Group, Department of Internal Affairs.

NZHistory.net.nz is designed and maintained by a small team within the Heritage Group of the Department of Internal Affairs. Contributions are welcome. <http://www.NZHistory.net.nz>

US National Forest Service Museum

A museum related to its National Forest Service is being developed at Missoula in Montana. The museum will be 'national in class and scope, chronicling the entire history of the Forest Service, including Forestry Research, Cooperative Forestry, International Forestry and the National Forest System. The museum will preserve the work of the great pioneers in American forestry and provide a centre for ongoing study.'

Piccabeen palms

Dian Elvin sent a lovely photograph which she took of the piccabeen palms on Fraser Island. It is full of their glorious green colour and she has kindly allowed it to be used for the design of the cover of our conference proceedings.

Margaret Kowald found another piccabeen palm photo in the Queensland Forestry Library taken about 1950. It shows a family group in a palm forest. It too is being incorporated into the design, together with botanical drawings of the seeds and fruits.

It seems that this palm, *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, is also known as bangalow palm in New South Wales but in keeping with the Queensland theme of our conference, we are staying with 'piccabeen'. Or should it be 'picabeen'? The emails have been flying on the difficult question of one or two 'c's. Again we find State differences. Maiden in New South Wales and Boland et al.'s *Forest Trees of Australia* have one, while Bailey and other Queensland botanists have two. We defer to the Queenslanders, but wonder on the origins of the name. Anybody have any ideas?

新式迷彩服



The latest style in camouflage

Mark Elvin kindly sent in this Taiwanese cartoon which is captioned:

The indiscriminate and excessive felling of mainland China's forests has been a major factor in the soil erosion contributing to devastating floods in recent years...the mainland army will have to change the pattern of its camouflage if it hopes to blend in the new look of the mainland landscape. (*Workers Daily*, 15 January 1999)

Things to be done!

Volunteers are always needed! Let the Committee know if you have time and would like to be involved. Some of the things we need to do are:

- Design web page
- Prepare material for web page – think about what should be on it?
- Help Task Force on forest records
- Help Task Force on forest museums
- Help re heritage of arboreta and trial plots
- Send in an item for the Newsletter

STOP PRESS

Peter Holzworth's 'Monarchs of the woods' is being launched by the Hon. Henry Palaszczuk MLA, Minister for Primary Industries, at Imbil on Friday, 5 November.

AUSTRALIAN FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY Incorporated

Statement of Accounts for the period from 2 November 1998 to 30 June 1999

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

Income (\$)

Transfer from previous Society		2857.19	
Subscriptions	1545.33		
Conference	24941.05		
Interest	<u>12.59</u>	<u>26498.97</u>	<u>29356.16</u>

Expenditure (\$)

Petty cash	250.00		
Printing Newsletters, etc	266.00		
Postage	305.35		
Conference	21712.50		
Bank charges and taxes	126.42		
Insurance	311.96		
Stationery	<u>33.40</u>	23005.63	
Carry forward to next Financial year		<u>6350.53</u>	<u>29356.16</u>

Surplus of Trading Income over Expenditure (i.e. net of transfer from Previous Society and carry forward to next Financial Year) (\$)

Trading income	26498.97		
Trading expenditure		<u>23005.63</u>	<u>3493.34</u>

BALANCE SHEET

Cash in Bank at 18 Nov 1998	0.00		
Petty cash (from previous Society)	<u>2.95</u>		2.95
Cash in Bank at 30 June 1999	6350.53		
Petty cash on hand	<u>17.80</u>		6368.33

NOTES

1. The audited accounts for the previous unincorporated Society were tabled at the Annual General Meeting held on 21 April 1999.
2. The incorporated Society opened an account with the Commonwealth Bank on 2 November 1998.
3. All the assets of the previous unincorporated Society were transferred to the Australian Forest History Society Incorporated.
4. The surplus of trading income over expenditure of \$3493.34 arose primarily from the conference. Expenditure on publishing the conference proceedings will occur during the Financial Year to 30 June 2000.

Calendar

Australia

26-28 Nov. 1999, Perth. *New African perspectives: Africa, Australasia and the wider world at the end of the twentieth century.* African Studies Association of Australasia & the Pacific
Contact: Prof. Cherry Gertzel, School of Social Sciences and Asian Languages, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth, W.A. 6845 Email: gertzel@spectrum.curtin.edu.au
Tel: (08) 9299 7418 <http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/ASCWA/conference99/>

5-9 July 2000, Adelaide. *Futures in the past.* Australian Historical Association.
Katharine Massam Email: aha@adelaide.edu.au
[Http://arts.adelaide.edu.au/arts-web/News/AHAConf/](http://arts.adelaide.edu.au/arts-web/News/AHAConf/) Papers are being called for.

November 2000, Coonabarabran, NSW. *The Perfumed Pineries: Histories of the Callitris forests of New South Wales and Queensland.* Jointly by the Australian National University, Macquarie University and the Australian Forest History Society.
Contact: John Dargavel, Tel: (02) 6258 9102, Email: dargavel@spirit.com.au
Di Hart, Tel: (02) 9869 2516 Email: dhart@magna.com.au

International

16-19 March 2000, Tacoma, State of Washington, USA. *Into the next Millenium: the past and promise of environmental history.* American Society of Environmental History. Contact: Mart Stewart, Dept. of History, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA, USA 98225-9056. Email: smar4@cc.wwu.edu

7-12 August 2000, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. *Forests and Society: the Role of Research.* XXI IUFRO World Congress
Contact for Conference details and registration: IUFRO 2000 Congress Secretariat Forest Research Institute, Kepong, 52109 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Fax: +6 03 6365687
Email: iufroxxi@frim.gov.my <http://frim.gov.my/iufro/html>
Contact for Forest History Group sessions: Dr Elisabeth Johann, Wlassakstrasse 56, 1130 Wein, Austria. Email: elis.johann@Carinthia.com

18-22 April 2001, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, *National Council on Public History 2001 Annual Meeting*
Contact: 2001 Contact: Program Committee, National Council on Public History, c/o IUPUI, 425 University Boulevard - Cavanaugh 327, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202-5140
USA. dave_neufeld@pch.gc.ca or ronard@mtsu.edu

APPLICATION/RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP FOR THE YEAR TO 30 JUNE 2000

The Australian Forest History Society changed its subscription period from calendar years to financial years. The change was effected by making a transitional subscription period of 18 months from 1 January 1999 to 30 June 2000. Members who were financial in the period 1 January 1999 to 30 June 1999 will remain financial until 30 June 2000.

The subscription for the year to 30 June 2000 has been set at \$25 (overseas \$30 Australian) with a discounted rate for students of \$15.

Name:

Address:(State)(Postcode)

Tel: Fax: Email:

Please mail cheque or money order for \$25 or \$15 for students (Overseas \$30 in Australian currency) payable to:
Australian Forest History Society Inc., 20 Laidley Place, Florey, ACT 2615

