AUSTRALIAN

Forest History

SOCIETY Inc.

Newsletter no.

26

August 2000

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

Collecting oral histories

Oral history can provide powerful insights into how people have interacted with Australian forests and woodlands. Two notable examples spring to mind. Gregg Borschmann's most attractive volume, *The people's forest* (1999), was based on interviews he had conducted for the National Library's oral history collection. Ian Watson's earlier analysis of forest disputes on the north coast of New South Wales, *Fighting over the forests* (1990), was based on interviews with timber workers and environmentalists there. Both were able to draw out the meanings and values which individuals held about the forests in ways which deepened our understanding of the complexities involved.

Oral history has an urgency to it. Old Time is still a-flying, and we feel that we should gather recordings — as well as rosebuds — while we may. The Society is collaborating with the John Oxley State Library in Brisbane to conduct interviews with retired forest workers in order to gain an understanding of forest-related activities in Queensland especially with respect to operational tasks, key people, changes, trends, notable events and changing technology. Four members of the Society are involved: Peter Kanowski and Peter Holzworth, both retired foresters, are conducting the interviews, while Margaret Kowald and Judy Powell, both members of the Professional Historians Association, are providing supervision, administration and management. The Library is providing the recording equipment. Full transcripts are not envisaged at this stage, but a log providing an index to the content of each tape will be made. The tapes and logs will be stored and can be used in the John Oxley Library.

In Western Australia, a group of people in the timber industry are starting to think about how a similar endeavour might be undertaken there. Perhaps the Society may be able to help these groups share their experiences in organising such projects.

The material history can have a similar and related urgency to it. Bob Hadlow is surveying all the horse and bullock drawn vehicles used in the forests and other industries. Not only are the vehicles disappearing, so is the knowledge of how they were used. Perhaps members can help him record this information before it is lost (see page 7).

ditors: John Dargavel, 20 Laidley Place, Florey, ACT 2615 Tel/Fax (02) 6258 9102 Caroline Polak Scowcroft, 33 East Gate, Winnipeg, MB R3C 2C2 Canada

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Frank Moulds

Members will be sad to learn that Frank Moulds passed away suddenly on 31 March this year. Frank had warmly supported the Society since its inception. He was the author of *The dynamic forest: a history of forestry and forest industries in Victoria* in 1991 and, with Margaret Burns, of histories of the Macedon State Nursery and the Mount Macedon Memorial Cross, in 1996 and 1997. Frank was a graduate of the Victorian School of Forestry and of Melbourne and Yale Universities. His long career in forestry included being Principal of the Victorian School of Forestry, Chief of the Division of Forest Education and Research, Chief of the Division of Management, and subsequently Commissioner and Chairman of the Forests Commission of Victoria from 1969 to 1978.

News of members

We welcome Bob Bunning and Mary Jackson to the Society. Bob is experienced in the Western Australian timber industry, sandalwood and the establishment of eucalypt plantations in Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria. Mary and Ken Jackson are on sabbatical leave and wrote from Worthing in the UK on their way back to New Zealand via Armidale.

We are delighted to report that John Banks is recovering from the illness reported in the last issue.

Several members were able to meet Jane Carruthers, back in Australia for a few weeks to continue her comparative histories of South Africa and Australia. She presented a paper comparing the Kalahari Gemsbok and Uluru-Kata Tjuta national parks at the 'Land, Culture, Place and Identity' Conference in the University of Western Australia in July. A short form of the paper will be published in Australian Humanities Review later this month (see http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/). She continued with a research trip to the Channel Country with Tom Griffiths and others.

Congratulations to Marie Keatley on the award of her doctorate from the University of Melbourne.

Garry Kerr and Rosemary Douglas have each produced a most attractive publication in collaboration with others. Garry collaborated with Harry McDermot on a history of huon pine, reviewed later. It follows his earlier history of the timber industry in south-west Victoria. Clearly, it is on the prescribed reading list for members before our next national conference in Tasmania. Rosemary collaborated with Margaret Perry last year to produce a photo-essay of Bairnsdale on the Mitchell with a short overview of the history of the city.

Research questions

Callitris

Brian Roberts draws the attention of dendrochronologists to the very large old *Callitris* in the Lake Mungo area. He reports that the trees are located on the main entry road about a kilometre from the Mungo homestead. Although the trees are now falling apart, they would appear to offer an important opportunity for dating studies. Brian can be contacted at Sinclair Knight Merz, PO Box 839, Toowoomba, Tel: 07 4639 8400 or

Email: broberts@skm.com.au

James Breckenridge

I am investigating James Breckenridge, the young Scottish engineer who accompanied William Pettigrew's second-hand sawmill to Sydney on the Anna en Elise in 1853. John Dargavel thought that after Breckenridge left Brisbane he spent the rest of his career working in sawmills in NSW. Right now I'm writing the part of my thesis on Pettigrew that deals with Breckenridge. I have material from Pettigrew's diaries and letters which tells of the arrival of the Anna en Elise, the trip up the coast to Brisbane, the erection of the sawmill, the arrival of Pettigrew's brother John, and the quarrels that eventually led to the breakup of the partnerships (which included Breckenridge). However, after 1854, the only reference I have to Breckenridge is an advertisement in the Moreton Bay Courier on 21 February 1857, in which Breckenridge has a sawmill for sale. His address is given as Honeysuckle Point, Newcastle, NSW.

I wonder if any member has any material about Breckenridge's later career that would help me round him out of the Pettigrew story? It's so frustrating when you only need a few sentences, but have nothing at all! Any references that I could follow up would be most gratefully received.

Elaine Brown

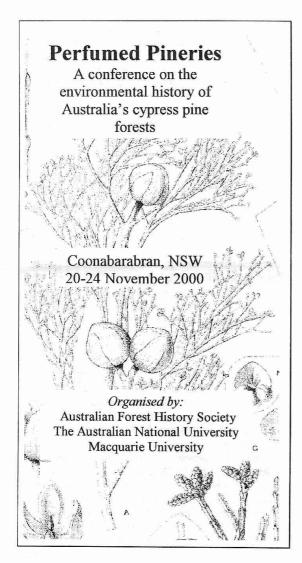
Email: gebrown@spiderweb.com.au

New Zealand Forestry History Archive

Ron O'Reilly reports that the New Zealand Forestry History Archive is slowly being added to. It is held in the Library of the University of Canterbury in Christchurch where the New Zealand School of Forestry is located. A complete listing is being prepared.

Hearty welcomes await ...

Any Newsletter items or unpaid subscriptions for 2000/2001!



Progress report

The response to the call for expressions of interest in this conference has been far broader than originally envisaged. The lack of any book giving an overall treatment of *Callitris* has meant that the conference is providing what is probably the first opportunity for people with an interest in these forests to get together. Hence, the conference will have not only the regional history focus originally envisaged, but also a focus on the long environmental history of the whole genus. There are 19 species of *Callitris*, and speakers are expected from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania, as well as New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria.

Programme

Monday, 20 November

5 – 7 pm Registration

8 - 9.30 pm Welcome and opening.

Keynote papers by Eric Rolls and

Tom Griffiths

Tuesday, 21 November

9 – 5 pm Evolution and ecology

Keynote paper by Henry Nix

7.30 - 9 pm Science in the Pilliga

Wednesday, 22 November

8 – 5 pm Forest study tour of Pilliga

Thursday, 23 November

9-5 Fire, values and uses

Keynote paper by David Bowman

7 pm Conference dinner

Friday, 24 November

8.30 - noon Managing the forests

Keynote papers by Jim Noble and

John Dargavel

Close

1 - 5 pm

Conducted walk in the Pilliga Nature Reserve (own transport)

The conference timetable has been extended to allow for a half-day session on the Friday, which will allow people to catch the afternoon flight or drive to

Sydney that day.
Although 30 n

Although 30 papers have been offered, they will be short so that there will be plenty of time for discussion and contributions from the floor. The short papers will be published and the conference will consider how a larger definitive book on *Callitris* might be undertaken.

Preliminary indications are that the conference will attract a considerable attendance. As the venue seats a maximum of 60, early registration (and probably flight booking too) is strongly advised. Registration materials are enclosed with this Newsletter. Further information is available from:

Pineries Conference
Department of Forestry
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200

Fax: 02 6249 0746

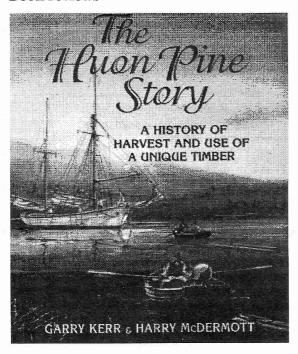
Tohn Dargavel 02 6249 3565 or 02 6258 9102(h)

Diane Hart 02 4982 0787

email: Pineries@anu.edu.au or web:

http://www.es.mq.edu.au/physgeog/pineries.htm

Book reviews



Book reviews

Garry Kerr and Harry McDermott 2000. The Huon pine story: a history of harvest and use of a unique timber. Portland, Victoria: Mainsail Books. ISBN 0 95779170 4, pp. 299. Available from Mainsail Books, PO Box 316, Portland, Vic. \$59.95 hardback or \$44.00 softback incl. GST plus \$8.50 postage and handling.

Reviewed by John Dargavel

Oral histories can bring a particular insight to topics which more documentary histories often miss. The sound of the human voice and the immediacy and individuality of personal experience can speak to us through their texts, when they are well done. The editorial eye is critical to their success, especially if much of the material is prepared directly from the transcripts of interviews, as was *The people's forest* produced by Gregg Borschmann last year.

The first six chapters trace the history of huon pine logging from the convict period to the present. Then follow ten thematic chapters on subjects such as the piners' camps, horses, rivermen, riverboats, women's lives and so forth. The final chapter, contributed by Mike Peterson of Forestry Tasmania, concerns the ecology, distribution and dendrochronology of the species. Some appendices give details of when some of the pining vessels were built and extracts from two diaries of individual piners.

The Huon pine story gains its particular strength from its authors' involvement with ships and timber. Garry Kerr is a professional fisherman and a historian of boats as well as timber. Harry McDermott has spent his life in Strahan and knew many of the 'piners', the men who worked in the remote wet cold valleys of Tasmania's south-west cutting the huon pine logs and floating them down the rivers to various mills. The authors interviewed many of the piners and also drew on other interviews taped by Tim Bowden in 1986 for the A.B.C. and by Peter Neilsen in 1986 for a thesis. What comes across is the grinding hardship of their lives and their hardiness in enduring it. There is much else in the book, considerable detail on the way the logging and extraction was carried out, how 'piners punts' were built and used, craftsmen's work with huon pine, and a hundred other things. The volume could perhaps have been called a compendium and it is most enjoyably read that way, a little dipped into here and there, taking time to examine the photographs and enjoy the beauty of the scenic ones.

Any interesting history always whets one's appetite for more and we can hope that it will stimulate others to investigate more of the region's history and perhaps set it in the wider Tasmanian and Australian context. Although a certain amount of work has been done on the barbarous Macquarie Harbour penal settlement, the production records still existing in the Tasmanian State Archives might well yield further insights.

Like The people's forest and the excellent publications of the Light Railways Research Society, The Huon pine story is a most attractive and readable publication. It is lavishly illustrated with photographs of south-west Tasmania. As well as many historic black and white photos there are just as many recent photographs reproduced in full colour. Although printers are rarely mentioned in reviews, I see that the Australian Print Group at Maryborough in Victoria has produced not only this volume but also Peter Evans' 1994 Rails to Rubicon and Mike McCarthy's 1993 Settlers and Sawmillers, both for the Light Railways Society. We are particularly fortunate in Australia that people like Garry Kerr, Harry McDermott, Peter Evans, Mike McCarthy and Norm Houghton produce work which adds immeasurably to our forest history.

If I have a quibble with *The Huon pine story*, it is that all the effort which has gone into the research and production of this book warranted the services of a professional editor. Nevertheless, occasional infelicities are soon forgotten as one sits in front of a winter's fire reading of the hardiest of all lives in Australia's timber industries.

Publications noted

- M. Agnoletti and S. Anderson (eds) 2000. Forest History: International Studies on Socioeconomic and Forest Ecosystem Change. Oxford: CABI Publishing (IUFRO Research Series 2). pp. 432, hardback, ISBN 0 85199 419 9 £55.
- M. Agnoletti and S. Anderson (eds) 2000. Methods and approaches in forest history. Oxford: CABI Publishing (IUFRO Research Series 3). pp. 304, hardback, ISBN 0 85199 420 2 £49.95.

These two books contain 54 papers presented at the History and Forest Resources conference held in Florence in 1998. The conference was organized by the Italian Academy of Forestry Science and the working group on Forest History of the International Union of Forestry Research Organisations (IUFRO). They are published as part of the collaborative series established by IUFRO and the publishing arm of CAB International. Their production owes much to the hard work of Mauro Agnoletti in Florence and Steven Anderson in Durham, North Carolina, the support of the (US) Forest History Society, the US Forest Service, and the high standards set by CABI.

The 31 chapters in the first volume listed above are mostly concerned with Europe, particularly with Italy, with one each from Australia, Canada and India. They cover a wide range of topics and periods. The 23 chapters in the second volume mentioned are similarly diverse but have been grouped to demonstrate many ways forest history is approached by different disciplines. Michael Williams' categorisation of approaches to forest history is a notable contribution.

A particular pleasure for your editor, who attended the conference but whose command of Italian is limited and of Spanish non-existent, is that the papers in these languages have been translated into English. The only two non-English papers are in French. An Italian edition is also being prepared.

Australian readers will find many themes in these volumes which resonate with our history and help us see ourselves in a world context. For a complete listing of papers in the two volumes visit the CABI Publishing website at http://www.cabi.org. Orders can be made on the web site.

Richard Harris 2000. To market! To market! The changing role of the Australian timber merchant 1945-c1965. Australian Economic History Review 40(1): 22-50.

In urban Australia, timber merchants have been the most important of all building supply dealers. In the 1940s they had close ties to sawmillers while providing timber and credit to contractors. A

changing business climate forced them to adapt: sawmills and large builders began to deal directly; competition from timber 'substitutes' cut profits; above all, demand from amateur builders soared. Merchants responded by diversifying, relocating, and offering advice and credit, although more slowly than their North American counterparts because of their closer links with the timber trade. Targeted at amateurs, these adaptations also helped small commercial operators to remain competitive with a new breed of project builders.

Recent Journals

Environment and History 6(2), May 2000

Read the latest issue, it has quite excellent papers as befits the last issue prepared under Richard Grove's founding editorship. The two comparative history papers are particularly valuable and may serve as exemplars of comparisons which Australian forest historians might be stimulated to take. Subash Chandran and Donald Hughes, both past visitors to our conferences, have written on 'Sacred groves and conservation' comparing South India to the Mediterranean. Gregory Barton has compared 'Empire forestry and American environmentalism'.

A paper by Kevin Hannam looks at the utilitarian identity of the Indian Forest Service and its recourse to masculinity as a way of distinguishing itself from the rest of the public service. A paper by Donald Shug on 'The bureaucratisation of forest management' also takes the case of India, but how similar are several of the themes in both these papers to the Australian experience! Stephen Dovers uses just that experience to argue that environmental history should take a more prominent place in pressing issues of environmental policy (others may sense dangers in bureaucratising history, however).

A welcome addition in this issue is a larger review section. Judy Bennett's review of *Environmental change in the Pacific Basin* by Patrick Nunn might well persuade Australian readers to buy the book.

History of Australian Science and Technology Bibliography

The History of Australian Science and Technology Bibliography (HASB) has just been relaunched with many new entries and a new fully-searchable web interface. The bibliography has been compiled by the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre as part of Bright Sparcs, and contains details of nearly 5,000 publications up to 1998 (with 1999 in preparation). It's based on a number of sources, in particular, Laurie Carlson's annual bibliographies

published in Historical Records of Australian Science.

The coverage is broad and includes publications from related areas such as medicine, engineering and environmental history, so many of you are likely to find items of interest. Go to: HASB Search/Browse - http://barney.asap.unimelb.edu.au/hasb/hasb.php3

I've tried to make the new web interface easy to use, while providing a number of search and viewing options (it's a tricky balance). Searches can based on author's name/s, title keywords, publication date, and publication type. You can also browse the contents via alphabetical lists of authors and journals. Search results can be viewed either as a list, or as single items. In the latter view, you're presented with suggestions for 'follow-up' searches, such as 'More publications by this author', or 'More articles from this journal. Results can also be 'tagged' to create your own select bibliography for easy saving or printing. For more information on how to use the bibliography, view the Help system (click on the question mark near the top of the Search/Browse page).

Alternatively, you can obtain the contents of the Help system as a text file by simply sending an empty email, with no subject, to help@discontents.com.au. The help file will be sent back to you automatically so you can print it out, read it, and file it away for future reference. The web interface is still under development. I plan to add many additional features, such as more links to online resources, in coming months.

If you have any comments or suggestions relating to the interface, please send them to me at <tim@discontents.com.au>. Problems likewise, though read the help pages first! For those interested in the technicalities, the web interface was built from PHP3 and PHPLib (scripting), PostgreSQL (database), and Apache (WWW server). All free, open source software. I'm more than happy to share the code and would be pleased for others to develop improvements and enhancements. It's a relatively trivial matter to export data from something like Endnote into such a system. For more details contact me at the email above. Suggestions or corrections relating to the contents of the bibliography are welcomed and should be sent to Bright Sparks at: bsparcs@austehc.unimelb.edu.au

Tim Sherratt

Native Solutions: Indigenous Knowledge and Today's Fire Management — An International Symposium, Hobart, 6-8 July 2000

Stimulating and boring, interesting and annoying, wide-ranging and narrow, important and trivial, scientific and social, pragmatic and spiritual; conflicting words to capture some impressions of a most unusual conference. With plenary sessions, panel discussions and forty papers in up to five concurrent sessions jammed into two days, it can hardly be summarised in a brief report by one person. Several agendas and debates ran through the meeting which was preceded by a forum solely for Indigenous people and followed by a long field day. There were academic heavy-weights such as Tim Flannery, Marcia Langton and Henry Lewis from Canada, and elders from different parts of Australia who embodied the authority and knowledge to speak for their country. There were scientists, students and fire managers. People came from all over Australia about a quarter of the 180 delegates were Indigenous and a handful from overseas. At a time when reconciliation is a leading matter on the national agenda, the symposium gave me much to reflect on about balance in Australian forest history, about my own research practice and about convening meetings.

The meeting was convened by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service in association with the management of the Southwest World Heritage area, the Tasmanian Lands Council and the Riawunna Centre for Aboriginal Education in the University of Tasmania. The ostensible reason for holding the meeting concerned the fractious debate within the national parks community between those who advocate deliberate fire management to maintain biodiversity and those who eschew any form of human action and would let fire happen only where and when it will. It is a debate with ideological, spiritual, philosophic, ecological and practical dimensions, some of which can be informed by historical and ecological study. It has been brought to a head in Southwest Tasmania by the increasing realisation that without fire, the biodiversity of the World Heritage area may constrict. Jon Marsden-Smedley summarised it neatly on a poster:

Over the past decade the Parks and Wildlife Service has been researching buttongrass moorland fire behaviour. From this research, a fire management strategy has been developed which has the potential to replicate Indigenous-style burning patterns. This strategy has been termed unbounded patch burning and involves lighting fires under conditions that allow the fuel to burn well during the day but ensure the fires self-extinguish overnight due to increases in fuel moisture and decreases in wind speed.

If the ecological, geoheritage and cultural values of southwest Tasmania are going to be effectively managed then extensive unbounded patch burning will be required in the region's buttongrass moorlands. Such burning will probably be very similar to what was the Indigenous management regime. It also has the potential to maintain species diversity in buttongrass moorlands, minimise threats to fire-sensitive assets from large-scale wildfires and maintain the region's cultural landscapes.

Another debate which ran through the meeting concerned the relative importance of climatic change and Indigenous burning practices in fashioning the Australian landscape. But some of this debate seemed to arise from different perspectives of time and scale. The climate and pollen people (palynologists) looking at geological time and continental scales downplay human action, while historical ecologists focus on the effects of Indigenous fire regimes described by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous speakers from around the country.

A series of statements emphasised the cultural significance of fire to Indigenous people. I found the folksy declarations of its spiritual importance to Cherokee people given in a keynote address by Thomas Alcoze from Arizona to be acutely irritating, but the person sitting next to me found it uplifting, which probably says more about me than about Alcoze!

What did come through the whole meeting was the importance of understanding how the Australian landscape - and for forest historians, the forest structure - has been fashioned by Indigenous fire and how it has been changed by the loss of most of those fire regimes. While I learnt something of these matters at the conference, I felt that I needed to reappraise my own work and think about what might constitute a post-colonial forest history practice. David Bowman described how co-operative ecological research projects were conducted in Northern Australia and the ethical and funding issues involved. It stimulated me to wonder about how forest history research might be conducted in other settings and to what extent the Indigenous values imbedded in our forest structures and landscapes have been recognised. Peter Read's new book, Belonging, makes the case that addressing such issues is how non-Indigenous Australians can learn how to fully belong here. Much to think about.

John Dargavel

The Ghastly Sales Tax (GST)

With many thanks to Kevin Frawley for having filled in a horrid form, we now have an ABN. It is 56 477 824 185. We get no respite, and have to pay 10 per cent more on everything. Maybe we can get classified as an Income Tax Exempt Charity if we can cope with an even more horrid form and work out whether it gains us anything at all.

Our proceedings have gone up by a mysteriously calculated 8.49 per cent and are now \$32.50 instead of \$30.00. Still a great buy though! The first two volumes are now out of print but there are stocks of the third and fourth volumes: Australia's Everchanging Forests III (1997) and Australia's Everchanging Forests IV (1999). Fliers with order forms can be obtained from: Publications Section, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200. Tel: (02) 6249 4598 Fax: (02) 6249 0757 Email: publications@cres.anu.edu.au Order forms and details of the books are on the

Internet at: http://cres.anu.edu.au/publications/ Each volume now costs \$32.50 plus \$7.50 handling (or A\$15.00 for overseas orders).

Stop Press

History of animal draft vehicles

Bob Hadlow is researching the history of animal drawn vehicles used in all goods and services trades in Australia. He would particularly welcome more information about all the vehicles used in the forests. He has been searching out all sorts of whims, jinkers, bobtails, under-loaders, over-loaders, wagons, drays, spring carts and so forth.

His research involves making very precise measurements of these vehicles, of which there are innumerable different types, and plotting them on a CAD system to provide detailed scale drawings. What he is particularly looking for now is detailed information on the names of components and how the vehicles were used or worked. Contact: Bob Hadlow, PO Box 4753, Kingston, ACT 2604. Tel: 02 6295 6147.

Calendar

Australia

- 20-23 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, 20 6258 9102 or Di Hart, 20 9869 2516 Email: Pineries@anu.edu.au URL: http://www.es.mq.edu.au/physgeog/pineries.htm
- 30 August-2 September 2001, National Library of Australia, Canberra,: Voices of a twentieth century nation: Oral History Association of Australia National Conference. Early call for papers:

 If interested in speaking at or attending this conference next year contact Dr Susan Marsden, Convenor, 20 6247 6766, fax 02 6249 1395, email acnt@spirit.com.au. If you wish to be supplied with further information or be placed on the mailing list please supply details (name, address, organisation, phone, email) and return to: Oral History Section, National Library of Australia, Parkes Place, Parkes ACT 2600.
- 18-20 February 2002, Hobart. Australia's ever-changing forests V: Fifth national conference on Australia's forest history. Our fifth national conference will be held in Tasmania in the third week of February 2002. The conference will be held in Janet Clark Hall in the University of Tasmania. It will be followed by a study tour of the southern forests in the Huon valley staying at Geeveston on 20 and 21 February. Contact: Denise Gaughwin, \$\mathbb{T}\$ 03 6336 5384 Email: deniseg@fpb.tas.gov.au, or John Dargavel, \$\mathbb{T}\$ (02) 6258 9102 Email: dargavel@spirit.com.au

International

- 2-3 September 2000, Wellington, New Zealand. *Public History: Meanings, Ownership, Practice*. Contact: PHANZ, PO Box 1904, Wellington, New Zealand. Email: gavin.mclean@dia.gov.nz
- 28 March-1 April 2001, Durham, NC, USA. Making Environmental History Relevant in the 21st Century. Jointly by American Society for Environmental History and Forest History Society. Contact: Steve Anderson, President, Forest History Society, 701 Vickers Ave, Durham, NC 27701, USA Email: stevena@Duke.edu

APPLICATION/RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP FOR THE YEAR TO 30 JUNE 2001

The subscription for the year to 30 June 2001 has been set at \$25 (overseas \$30 Australian).

	Discounted rate for	or students of \$15.	
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