AUSTRALIAN

Forest History

SOCIETY Inc.

Newsletter no.

28

March 2001

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

A call to advance Australian forest history

With this issue is the First Notice and Call for Papers for our fifth national conference, Australia's Ever-changing Forests V, to be held in Hobart on 18-20 February 2002. As with our previous conferences, we seek to capture the diversity of the work being done, the many perspectives being taken and the experience of people who come. Our ethos is to be inclusive and sociable. There will be formal papers, informal presentations and plenty of opportunities for discussions in and out of the conference sessions. And very much part of the conference will be a study tour to the Southern Forests based on Geeveston in the Huon Valley.

Our mission to advance historical understanding of human interactions with the Australian forests and woodlands is not to be taken parochially. We also advance our understanding when we consider situations elsewhere and environmental history more generally. We value contributions about neighbouring countries: New Zealand, The Solomons, Papua New Guinea and Melanesia have figured in previous conferences.

For this conference we plan to have a session devoted to recent trends in environmental and forest history generally. It is an exciting and lively field—a forest with vigorous stands, perhaps? Nowhere is this clearer than in the programme for the joint meeting of the American Society for Environmental History and the (US) Forest History Society to be held in Durham, North Carolina, 28 March-1 April. There are to be 170 papers in 50 sessions, and even organised (but not to be emulated in Hobart!) breakfast discussion sessions.

It will also be interesting to see the scope of the first conference to be held by the European Society for Environmental History at St Andrews in Scotland in September. Various meetings of IUFRO's Forest History Group also reveal trends and continuities in the way forest history is written. AFHS members plan to attend both the Durham and St Andrews meetings and we can hope that our meeting in Tasmania will have contributions from forest historians from other countries. They will be made most welcome.

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News of members

We welcome Bob Thistlethwaite from Kenmore in Queensland to membership of the Society. John Dargavel has worked with Elisabeth Johann in Austria and Mauro Agnoletti in Italy to prepare a history of forestry for the *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems* being produced under the auspices of UNESCO.

Work in progress and research questions

Judy Bennett:

World War II in PNG and South Pacific Islands

I am working on the environment and World War II in the South Pacific islands. The study will look at the obvious things: bombs and blasts, garden making and the destruction of Japanese gardens, fishing, timber extraction, the US Bureau of Economic Warfare and resource use, the politics of war damage compensation, and the disposal of 'surplus'. It will also look at things like pest introductions, how people remember place and landscape, and how they memorialise the dead in the landscape. Presently I am beginning to work on souvenirs the troops took home and collections for museums.

As part of this project, I plan to offer a paper on logging and sawmill operations in PNG to our next conference in Hobart. It will concentrate mainly on the US operations, but I hope to get the Aussies in there too. If any of the members have recollections, memoirs of Dad, photographs, I would be pleased to know. I expect to be in Canberra for about a month in November-December to work in the War Memorial again.

Judy Bennett
Department of History, University of Otago,
P O Box 56, DUNEDIN, New Zealand
Email: judy.bennett@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

Mark and Angela Fry: Tasmanian tramways and technology

We have been researching the history of the locopowered timber tramways and associated technology in Tasmania. Our research continues on and recently entered its fifth year. To date we have accumulated a considerable amount of information on the subject including over 650 photographs. Some research we are doing on the Kauri Timber Company at Smithton has drawn on the paper published in *Australia's Ever-changing Forests II*.

Mark Fry Email: markf@kiama.nsw.gov.au

Jenny Gardner: Hepburn, Macedon and Pyrenees Shires (Victoria) Timber Heritage Trail

This trail will interpret the significance of the timber heritage through the eyes of those who have been involved in it. It might include sawmillers, conservationists, furniture builders, other craftspeople, bee keepers, gold miners, charcoal burners, gardeners and recreationlists. It will also involve the local industries, as we are hoping to increase employment through this initiative.

Can you give me any information about these regions? I am after anecdotal information, research, fiction and non-fiction and most importantly sites of interest and importance. I am conducting community meetings and want to contact interested people.

Jenny Gardner
Creative Hat Interpretation,
Tel: (03) 9489 1530
Email: jgardner@labyrinth.net.au

Gathering the rosebuds: Queensland oral history project report

The Australian Forest History Society in Brisbane has now gathered a large vase of oral history blooms (including those with an occasional thorn) of folk whose history was interesting and prominent in days gone by. Soon to be lodged in Queensland's John Oxley Library, the 24 tapes tell the stories of men and women associated with forestry and natural resources in Queensland over decades.

Tales of all sorts have been collected from these retirees. From professional aspects of policy making and everyday operations to the very human social interactions down the years, there is a generous wealth of information at the disposal of history buffs.

Master tapes are held at the John Oxley Library. Each taped conversation has an accompanying summary and a cross-sectional index is being compiled for easier access to this historical information.

The project was conducted by four members of the Society. Peter Holzworth and Peter Kanowski (Snr), both retired foresters, have carried out the interviews, working with Margaret Kowald and Judy Powell, who are also members of the Professional Historians Association.

Much has been learnt from the project, both the pitfalls and the successes. Members are most welcome to discuss this with the project committee. It was a most rewarding exercise and there is much on tape for the historian.

Peter Holzworth

Australia's Ever-changing Forests V

Fifth National Conference on Australia's Forest History

Jane Franklin Hall, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 18-20 February 2002 Study Tour, Geeveston and the Southern Forests, 20-22 February 2002

Call for expressions of interest and offers of papers

A flier seeking expressions of interest in attending the conference and setting out the call for papers is enclosed with this Newsletter. Further copies are available from Committee Members and the Contacts listed below. As with our previous conferences, we will meet in plenary sessions without breaking into sub-groups.

We will have one session on trends in forest and environmental history internationally. Otherwise, papers on all aspects of forest history are welcome. One session will be devoted to short reports on research in progress. The Society will hold a General Meeting during the conference when future directions and other matters can be discussed.

The conference will be held in Jane Franklin Hall, a College of the University of Tasmania, which is located about 2 km from the centre of Hobart and about 1 km from the main campus.

The Study Tour will be to the Southern Forests region and will be based at Geeveston, 61 km South of Hobart, where we will stay for two nights in a comfortable motel. Geeveston, now a small town of some 800 people has a long association with the timber industry, being the site for the Huon Timber Company's sawmill, believed to be the largest in the Southern Hemisphere at the beginning of the twentieth century. When this closed in the 1920s, the site was used for a pilot pulp mill in which many of the techniques for making paper pulp out of eucalypts were developed. There is little industry there now, but there is an excellent Forest and Heritage Centre which we will visit. The surrounding forests are some of the best in Tasmania, with stands of tall *Eucalytpus regnans*, areas of temperate rainforest and a few Huon pines still to be found along some of the rivers.

Expression of interest forms and offers of papers (with title and 300 word abstract) are requested to be returned by 30 July 2001 to: Australian Forest History Society Inc., 20 Laidley Place, Florey, ACT 2615.

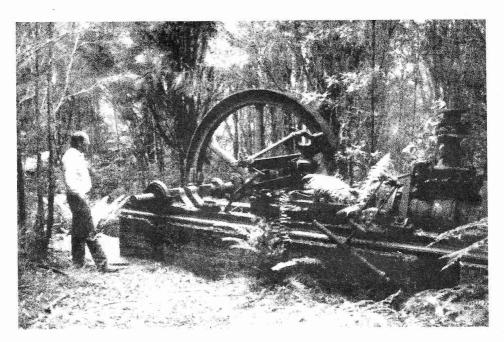
Contacts:

Programme:

John Dargavel: Tel: (02) 6259 9102; Email: foresthistory@asiaonline.net.au

Accommodation and study tour

Denise Gaughwin: Tel: (03) 6336 5384; Email: deniseg@fpb.tas.gov.au



Old mill site, New Haven Track, Northwest Tasmania

Photo courtesy of Adrian Pyrke

And a question for our industrial archeologists: just what is this?

Museums and exhibitions

Forest Gallery in the Melbourne Museum

This is just magnificent and we hereby ask our Victorian members to give us a full review for our next Newsletter. Meantime, here are some tempting tidbits:

The Forest Gallery is the first thing you see when you enter the Museum. The mountain ash forest it recreates is the key element of the Museum. It slopes up away from you and as you walk into it you get the feeling of walking up a forest track. Then the path forks and you can go down into a tunnel where the water theme is displayed, complete with aquaria. You come up again into a living forest—except that the giant ash trees can only be represented by poles. There are birds, but mercifully, no leeches!

There is a lot to take in, but it was the 'Correnderk Calendar' that appealed most to me. It sets out how the Kulin people know their six seasons of the year by changes in the plants, animals and climate of the forest. The other themes deal with earth, climate, fire and human use. It is wonderfully done.

But it was the Bunjilika Gallery of Koori history that overwhelmed me with the strength of its voice...I am going back as soon as I can.

John Dargavel

On the Bunya trail

'On the Bunya trail' is a joint initiative of Global Arts Link and Griffith University. The project aims to create a stimulating exhibition to promote public interest in an iconic element of Southeast Queensland—the Bunya tree (*Araucaria bidwilli*).

The exhibition will provide varied perspectives on the tree's place in the history and environment of the region by bringing together natural and human histories and ecological and cultural perspectives. This information will be linked to tourist sites and heritage trails in the region. The exhibition will encourage a sense of connection with landscape.

Research areas include: ecology and natural history; Murri culture, language, history and on-going linkages; European settlement, timber industry, food, crafts, folk lore; recreation and tourism; and representation of the tree in literature and the arts.

Griffith University will host a one-day seminar in May and the exhibition is planned to open in 2002.

The exhibition curator, Dr Anna Haebich, is keen to make contact with anyone who is interested in the Bunya tree. Please contact her at:

School of Humanities, Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland, 4111. Tel: 07 3875 7175.

Email: A.Haebich@mailbox.gu.edu.au

National Museum of Australia

Its open! In a most peculiar building, but then Melbourne's new Museum is pretty peculiar too. Like it or love it, it is what is inside that counts. There was such a crowd at the opening, we can not even give you some tid-bits. We call on our Canberra members for a review for our next Newsletter please.

Rings of History:

Contemporary Craft from Historical Timber

This is a truly national exhibition presenting high quality works by eighteen contemporary designers and makers from all States and Territories. It uses timber samples from the historic Dadswell Collection of commercial eucalypt timbers (described below). It draws links between contemporary Australian craft and design practice, Australian wood working traditions and the history of Australian commercial forestry. The exhibition is managed by Craft ACT in partnership with the Department of Forestry at ANU and the Museums and Galleries Foundation of NSW.

Contact: Aroona Murphy, Curator, 02 6262 9333

Canberra, Craft ACT	1 May - 3 June 2001
Port Macquarie	14 June – 29 July
Lismore Regional Gallery	9 Aug – 9 Sept
Craft Qld, Brisbane	21 Sept - 9 Nov
Cooloola	21 Nov - 6 Jan 2002
Riddoch Regional Gallery	28 Jan – 3 Mar
Araluen Centre, NT	16 Mar - 21 Apr
Flinders Art Museum	3 May – 2 June
Bunbury Regional Gallery	14 June - 28 July
Gippsland Art Gallery	31 Aug – 29 Sept
Geelong Gallery	1 Nov - 17 Jan 2003
Tasmanian Museum	31 Jan – 16 Mar

The Dadswell Collection and the timbers used for the Rings of History Exhibition

Phil Evans

The Rings of History exhibition show-cases the very best of contemporary wood design and making, and the diversity and beauty of native timbers used by Australian craftsmen and women. Each exhibition piece was fashioned from timber native to the makers home state and in many cases the species were selected on the basis of their suitability for certain applications. For example, firm fine-grained timbers such as white beech, scentless rosewood and huon pine were chosen for carving and soft decorative species such as red cedar and blackwood for joinery and turning. Some makers, however, took the opposite approach in selecting timbers for their work, prefer-

ring the challenge of working with timbers such as native ebonies and certain eucalypts that are difficult to machine and glue.

The diversity of timbers represented in the exhibition is without parallel and for the first time timbers representing all of the Australian states have been brought together as works of art in one exhibition. For example the relatively obscure native timbers of South Australia (pink gum, red box and brown stringybark) are represented in the work of Adrian Potter. Georgina Donovan of Victoria worked with the now rare Victorian waratah, kanuka box and lillipilli satinash, Anthony Hansen from Queensland was able to turn and carve Australia's ebonies (grey plum, green satinash and vitex lignum vitae). Without access to wood samples from the Dadswell Wood Collection such a rare and varied wood-craft exhibition would not have been possible.

The idea of having a collection of wood may at first seem rather strange, but in fact most countries have at least one such collection. The largest is found in the United States Forest Products Laboratory in Madison Wisconsin and consists of 98 635 specimens from 2700 genera. Australia's largest collection is located at the CSIRO Forest Products Laboratory in Melbourne. The rationale for a wood collection is primarily to satisfy the need to correctly identify timber. The practical importance of this was succinctly put by I. H. Boas, the first Chief of CSIRO's Division of Forest Products, 'it is obvious that to develop overseas trade in certain species of our timber it is essential that these should be readily distinguished from other timber superficially similar, but very different in properties'. Nowadays, when commercial trade is mainly restricted to a more limited range of plantation timbers, wood collections (or more correctly 'xylaria') are still essential for solving problems in archaeology, anthropology, forensics/law, wood technology and other applied fields where identified wood specimens are required for examination and identification.

At the time of Federation, Australia lacked a scientific wood collection and although native timbers had been used for building purposes since first settlement, often with some reluctance, information on their properties was sparse. After Federation, descriptive information on native timbers accumulated. For example Drew (1914) and Jolly (1917) described the properties and appearance of eucalypt timbers from NSW and Queensland, respectively. Maiden (1917) recorded the properties of the timber from trees native to NSW. In 1919 Baker published a book, 'Hardwoods of Australia', which contained information on the appearance properties, uses and wood anatomy of Australia's hardwoods. Both Baker

(1919) and Welch (1922) commented on the difficulties of identifying Australian timbers, and Welch described the features that were useful in separating tallowwood, blackbutt and spotted gum. Later on he developed a key for separating the ironbarks.

In Western Australia, Campion (1927) looked at the wood anatomy of jarrah, karri and red tingle with a view to developing a means of separating them. Swain (1927) developed the first comprehensive key for the identification of Australian timber species but his scheme was largely based on the physical characteristics of the woods and proved unsatisfactory for the identification of many eucalypts. By the late 1920's the need to correctly identify eucalypts had become pressing and extensive collection of wood samples began in order to develop a means of identifving commercially significant eucalypt timbers (and other hardwoods). Mr C. E. (Charlie) Carter began this work in January 1929 at the Australian Forestry School under the aegis of Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in cooperation with the Commonwealth Forestry Bureau.

By 1932 over 2000 timber samples, each from a different tree, had been collected from 143 species of eucalypts, 117 species of native hardwoods (other than eucalypts) and 26 species of indigenous and introduced softwoods. The collection of samples was aided by foresters in different states, for example, Senior Forester de Beuzeville in NSW, Mr C. J. J Watson in Oueensland and Mr A. J. Thomas in Tasmania. The authenticity of each sample was checked with reference to botanical material (leaves, cones and fruit) collected at the same time. Parallel work in preparing wood slides for microscopic examination was undertaken and the development of a reliable method of identifying the timbers based on their anatomical structure commenced. People involved in this project included Maisie Burnell, Audrey Eckersley and Dorothy Ellis, but it is the name of H. E. (Eric) Dadswell who was the driving force behind the work that is linked to the collection.

Eric Dadswell was born in Sydney on the 5th March 1903. He attended Newington College and trained as a chemist at the University of Sydney, obtaining his B.Sc and M.Sc degrees in 1925 and 1927, respectively. In 1926 he was selected as one of the first of CSIR's Overseas Research Students and spent just over 2 years at the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, where he met and married Ms Inez Williams. On returning to Australia in 1928 he spent a brief period at the Australian Forestry School in Canberra (the predecessor of the ANU Department of Forestry) where he worked with Charlie Carter on the identification of Australian timbers. In 1930 the work at the Australian Forestry

School was transferred to the Headquarters of the CSIR Forest Products Division in Melbourne and Dadswell took over the running of the project. Under the direction of Dadswell the team at CSIR did pioneering work on the wood anatomy of Australian wood species, particularly eucalypts, and resolved the major problem of identifying the commercially important eucalypt wood species. Their work was published in several CSIR Bulletins (Dadswell and Burnell 1932; Dadswell et al. 1934; Dadswell and Eckersley 1935) and was brought together by Dadswell in 1941 in a D.Sc thesis (Univ Melbourne) entitled 'Structure Identification and Properties of Australian Timbers'. Dadswell saw service during the 2nd World War in the New Guinea Forests Unit whose purpose was to assist army engineers and Forests Unit personnel in recognising and selecting the most suitable timber species for use as bridges, harbour and engineering works. After the war Dadswell rose steadily through the scientific ranks of CSIRO and became Chief of the Division of Forest Products from 1960-64. He died in 1964.

Dadswell's name will always be associated with eucalypt wood anatomy and Australia's largest wood collection. After his death the wood collection remained with the CSIRO Division of Forest Products, but seven years later the collection was recataloged from a numerical system to a botanical one (Family, Genus, Species) and small timber samples were cut from the original timber billets. The small samples were retained by CSIRO Forest Products Laboratory where they now reside under the watchful eye of CSIRO's only remaining wood anatomist, Jugo Ilic. The large billets were sent to Ingle Street in Port Melbourne where they remained in storage for 15 years. Closure of CSIRO's Ingle Street Offices led to the transfer of the collection to Latrobe University, Department of Botany. The willingness of Latrobe to take on the collection was based in part on Alan Wardrop's (Professor of Botany at Latrobe) longstanding interest in wood anatomy and ultrastructure.

Dr Fred Daniels curated the collection at LaTrobe, but after his death and following the retirement of Alan Wardrop, interest in the collection waned and Latrobe offered it to institutions with an interest in wood anatomy. Hence, in 1994 the collection was transferred back to Canberra to the Australian National University (ANU) where Dadswell's work on eucalypt anatomy first began in 1929. ANU's Department of Forestry had always maintained its own collection and the addition of the original Dadswell samples were invaluable to it. On arrival at the ANU, small timber samples were once again cut from the large billets and the samples were integrated with the rest of the ANU wood collection. The large

offcuts were packed in their original wooden crates and in the absence of suitable storage space, placed outdoors under tarpaulin. The transfer of the collection from Melbourne to Canberra was facilitated by the then Head of ANU Forestry, Professor Eric Bachelard. The Gottstein Trust and the ANU provided financial support for the transfer, and subsequent work. Phil Evans and Peter Beutel currently curate the collection.

Following the rehousing of the collection at the ANU, there has only been sporadic use of the large billets, mainly by postgraduate researchers from archaeology and anthropology seeking to identify charcoal fragments at ancient aboriginal sites. From time to time the billets are also used to obtain small samples for the teaching of wood anatomy at ANU, which in the past was carried out by both Charlie Carter and Eric Dadswell. The current method of storage of the billets is far from ideal and they are slowly deteriorating. The conversion of some of the Dadswell collection billets into objects of elegance and value in this exhibition means that they have been conserved and the inherent beauty of the wood enhanced. This is an outcome of which, I am sure, Dadswell would have approved. Threats to the collection are many and further ways of keeping the collection together, enhancing its value and ensuring its survival are being sought.

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- Welch, M. B. 1922. A method of identification of some hardwoods. Journal of the Royal Society of NSW 56: 241.
- Contact: Philip Evans, Department of Forestry, ANU, Canberra ACT 0200. Tel: 02 6125 3628 Email: Phil.Evans@anu.edu.

Reproducing significant trees

There is increasing public interest in Australia in conservation of our remaining trees and forests as well as a major push for revegetation. Most commonly, conservation is carried out in National Parks and Reserves, and through the activities of Landcare and other community-based tree-planting groups. An area of growing public concern for conservation is our 'historic' or 'significant' trees. Throughout Australia there are trees which are regarded as reminders of historic events or important people. Many of these are threatened due to their age, poor health and vandalism. Loss of these significant trees would cause the tangible link between the past and the present to be broken. One way to circumvent the loss of a significant tree is to propagate it vegetatively, so that an exact clone can be planted nearby, hence indirectly preserving the link with the event or person.

CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products has undertaken propagation of the 'Lone Pine' from Gallipoli Cove in Turkey. Clones were distributed to the RSL for planting in remembrance parks and other such places, with one of these clones planted at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra where it continues to grow. The 'Hovell Tree' near Albury NSW has also recently been propagated. The significance of the Hovell tree is a blaze it carries, Hovell Nov R17/24. made by William Hovell and Hamilton Hume in 1824 to mark their campsite next to a river they had just discovered. That river later became known as the Murray. Clones of the Hovell tree are to be planted around the original tree as a living reminder of the Hume and Hovell expedition - Hamilton Hume and William H. Hovell led the first expedition to travel overland from Sydney southwards to Port Phillip Bay, where Melbourne is now located.

CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products' Australian Tree Seed Centre is now planning the vegetative propagation of a number of other significant trees. An attempt on the 'Tree of Knowledge' in Barcaldine, Queensland, the birthplace of the Australian Labor Party, was made in 2000, but was unsuccessful due to an incompatibility with the rootstock. Another attempt will be made on that tree later this year, as well as similar work on a number of others including the 'Dig Tree' of Burke and Wills expedition fame.

Contact: Brioni Brammall:, Australian Tree Seed Centre, CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products, PO Box E4008, Kingston ACT 2604 Tel: 02 6281 8378

Email: brioni.brammall@ffp.csiro.au

Calendar

Australia

- 1 May-3 June 2001, Craft ACT, Canberra. (and subsequently touring Australia see p.5 for details).

 **Rings of History: Contemporary Craft from Historical Timber. Exhibition

 Contact: Aroona Murphy,

 © 02 6262 9333
- 30 August-2 September 2001, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

 Voices of a 20th century nation: Oral History Association of Australia National Conference.

 Contact Dr Susan Marsden, 20 6247 6766, fax 02 6249 1395, email acnt@spirit.com.au
- September 2001, Kalgoorlie, WA. *Empire*, *Nation, Region and Identity*. Australian Historical Association Regional Conference in association with Mining History Association. Contact: Mel Davies, Dept. Economics, Univ. of Western Australia, Nedlands, WA 6907. 208-09 380 2939. email: mdavies@ecel.uwa.edu.au
- 18-20 February 2002, Hobart. Australia's Ever-changing Forests V: Fifth national conference on Australia's forest history. The conference will be held in Jane Frankline Hall in the University of Tasmania. It will be followed by a study tour of the southern forests staying at Geeveston on 20 and 21 February. Contact: Denise Gaughwin, 203 6336 5384 email: deniseg@fpb.tas.gov.au, or John Dargavel, 202 6258 9102 email: dargavel@spirit.com.au

International

- 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
- 2-3 June 2001, Wellington, New Zealand. Communities and Oral History. National Oral History Assn. of New Zealand—Te Kete Korero-a-Waha o Te Motu. Contact: NOHANZ Conference P O Box 3819 Wellington, New Zealand; Email: megan.hutching@mch.govt.nz or linda.evans@natlib.govt.nz
- 5-8 September 2001, St Andrews, Scotland. *Environmental History: Problems and Potentials*. Contact: email: fj.watson@stir.ac.uk also check www.stir.ac.uk/ceph/ or www.eseh.org
- 9-15 October 2001, Kumaon University, Naini Tal/Himalaya, India.Forest History of the Mountain Regions of the World. IUFRO Working Party on Tropical Forest History. Contact: Dr Elisabeth Johann, A—9173 St Margareten, Freibach Austria. Email: elis.johann@carinthia.com 2+43 4226 216

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 students of \$15. Name: (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

