



AUSTRALIAN Forest History SOCIETY Inc.

Newsletter no. 29

June 2001

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

What's in a name?

The New South Wales Government has announced a programme to restore the original names of Aboriginal cultural sites and geographic landmarks, such as beaches, caves, rivers, mountains, bays and creeks. It is to be an optional and dual system, properly registered with the Geographical Names Board of New South Wales. We might expect that over time the original Aboriginal names would come to take precedence, much as Uluru has over Ayers Rock.

The idea of precedence in naming is of course well-established in botanical taxonomy. Although foresters grumble away whenever names are changed, they eventually get used to it. Common names are often specific to place; silvertop, coast ash, black ash and ironbark all refer to the same *Eucalyptus sieberiana* or now *E. sieberi*. For timber, they vary even more.

The recent *Perfumed Pineries* conference into the environmental history of what botanists now call the *Callitris* forests and woodlands provided an interesting instance. On reflection, it is remarkable that none of the speakers at the conference referred to the original names. Subsequent inquiry elicited some: munlarru, marung, marinhi, pimba or binba, gurraay, jinchilla, kulilypuru or kuli, karntirrikani, karapaarr and puratharr. When we think of all the trees and all the languages of Australia, we can only wonder at the richness of their names and grieve for those now lost.

Although scientific names can easily disappear from view, they can be retrieved. How many people now know that *Callitris* was once *Frenela*, for example. By patient searching through herbarium records in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and by examining the published flora, Sybil Jack has been able to reconstruct the changing pattern of naming their species. She recorded fifty-three different scientific names that have been used at various times for the seventeen species currently recognised.

Foresters learning their trees in New Zealand have to know their Maori, scientific and common names. Interestingly, the Maori names have proved the most stable.

The more we think about forest history, the more we find to do! Recovering all the names of our trees seems a right and proper task for forest historians.

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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 an excellent Forest and Heritage Centre which we will visit. The surrounding forests are some of the best in Tasmania, with stands of tall *Eucalyptus 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: foresthstory@asiaonline.net.au

Accommodation and study tour

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

Museums and exhibitions

National Museum of Australia

The National Museum of Australia opened in time to celebrate a hundred years of Federation and seems caught between the solid classicism of the reconstructed Victorian celebratory arch from 1901 on the cover of its map and the post-modern sprawl of its buildings seen from the Lake. Inside the space is cunningly used to lead the mind from one section to another.

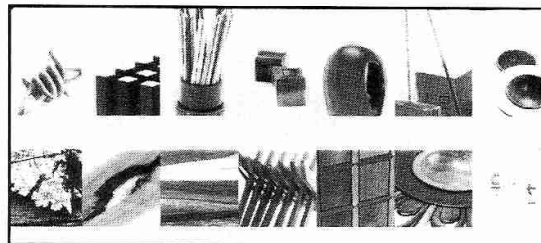
The themes are chosen to explore the creation of a nation—inevitably triumphalist—and start with 'Tangled Destinies, land and people' which is the section most relevant to the forest historian. The leitmotif comes from Eric Rolls who in 1997 wrote that Australia had seemed 'more a new planet than a new continent.' Unsurprisingly it concentrates—as people did in the nineteenth century, on the marsupials and other strange beasts, the kangaroo and the platypus rather than the flora, although the waratah is shown as astounding the European public in 1825.

The curators have made deft use of limited space. Screens of moving images, voices and sounds vary the static displays which have been carefully chosen to illustrate key ideas, such as that of Australia as a misfit amongst the world's continents. The extinctions are represented by the first known instance, that of the paradise parrot; the first, but not the last to be documented.

The display looks at the impact of imported species, using the example of the honey bee, which drove out the native bee causing some plants to set more seed and others less, and of the dramatic story of the importation of trout and salmon to Tasmania by James Youl. The inevitable rabbit is represented by the remnants of the rabbit fence. The display touches briefly on key nineteenth century figures for the history of flora such as Samuel Hannaford, who in 1856 gave the numbers of native plants as 10 000 to 12 000, six times those in Britain. It deals with Joseph Dalton Hooker who observed the decline of Australian plants in the face of imports from England. Some aspects of forest history, like burning, are included in the Aboriginal section and their knowledge of the chemical and medical properties of plants leads into the larger displays. The stress is not on the material but on the mind—the ways in which the country was 'imagined', and the role of the human mind in making the strange familiar.

Despite its limited direct coverage of forest issues, it is a fascinating museum to which one can return time and again.

Sybil M Jack



Rings of History:

Contemporary Craft from Historical Timber

Don't miss this exhibition! It is magnificent. In our last newsletter, we mentioned that it was about to open and now we have been able to see it. The quality and beauty of the pieces by eighteen of Australia's contemporary designers is one aspect of its appeal. The other is the origin of the timber from the historic Dadswell Collection of commercial eucalypt timbers (described in our last newsletter).

In opening the exhibition, Peter Kanowski reflected on the long history of collections of Australian woods and the pride that was taken in their display in the great international and inter-colonial exhibitions of the nineteenth century. In an era when the diversity of timbers in general use is shrinking, it is very satisfying to see a resurgence of this heritage in work such as this.

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

Contact: Aroona Murphy, Curator, 02 6262 9333

Forest Gallery in the Melbourne Museum

And for anyone visiting Melbourne, don't forget to visit this Gallery. Your editor went back again on a wet Sunday recently. As the gallery is a huge living display with real plants and animals it is encased in fine mesh as an aviary. On a wet day, the rain comes in which makes the feel of an ash forest all too realistic.

I half expected to see Norm Houghton appear out of the undergrowth, but the only things really missing are the leeches.

John Dargavel

Publications



AS I REMEMBER...

A PICTORIAL STORY OF THE EARLY WORKERS IN THE IMBIL FOREST

By Lindsay Harris

Lindsay Harris 2000, *As I remember: a pictorial history of the early workers in Imbil forest*. Gympie: the author. 52 pp. ISBN 0 646 37699 3. \$20 + \$5 postage, available from the author, 58 Henry St, Gympie, Qld, 4570

Members who went to our conference in Gympie in 1999 will remember the display of some of Lindsay Harris' paintings of people and forests in the Mary Valley. Over fifty of his works are reproduced in this volume and accompanied by short descriptions of the forest history of the area.

His paintings have the veracity and vividness of experience. Harris has worked in the forests all his life, first offside to his father and his bullock team, then working in the sawmilling industry for 30 years and finally working for the forest service. There are scenes of home and town life too: his mother doing the ironing, a dance in a local hall, the school, a football match and a poignant one of the burial service for the Unknown Soldier in Canberra in 1993.

The book has been excellently printed so that the colours of the original paintings are clear and sharp. It has an appealing directness in its images and its content.

John Dargavel

Recent journals

Forest History Today, Fall 2000.

This attractive magazine produced by the US Forest History Society contains some material likely to be of interest outside North America. An article by David Foster, Director of the Harvard Forest, makes a strong case for the importance of landscape history in regional conservation planning. His piece makes good use of photographic records of change. A history of the evolution of British Columbia's forest inventories has interesting parallels with Australian experience. An intriguing snippet was a reprint of Heinrich Cotta's Preface to his 1817 textbook on afforestation.

Environmental History 2001, vol. 6, nos 1 and 2

These issues have a wider geographical perspective than this journal usually takes. Issue 1 has articles on Holland and Spain. Issue 2 is a special one on the forest history of Asia. This is of particular interest because it focuses on the successes and failures of policies to devolve forestry from large central agencies to forms of community forestry. In Australia too, 'participation' is widely talked of but has had mixed results. The paper on community forestry in Nepal will be of special interest to the many Australian foresters who have also been involved with it. The case that forest history can usefully inform forest policy is amply demonstrated in this issue. As is usual, both issues have extensive book reviews.

Environment and History 2001, vol. 7, no. 1.

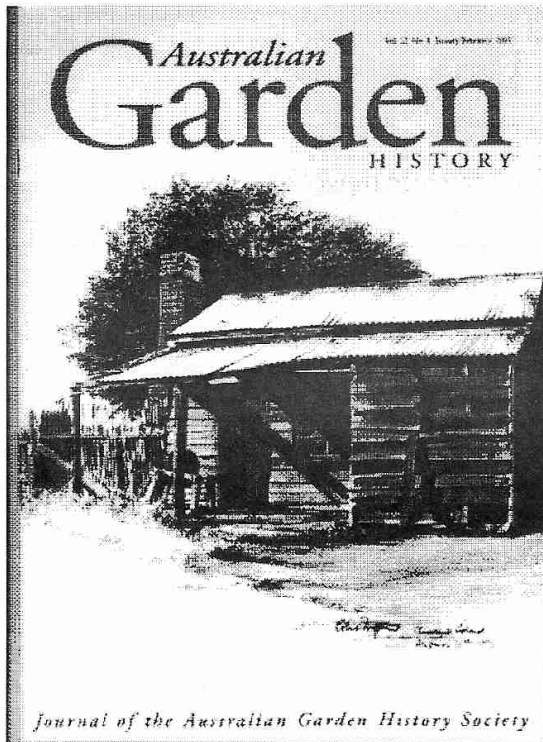
Brett Stubbs has a substantial article in this issue about how attitudes to native fauna evolved in NSW over the 1860s to 1960s period. In 'The farmer and the bushman', Peter Read and Marvic Wyndham have drawn an unusual comparison between forms of masculinity in Australia and those in Cuba. They used songs to reveal their theme which must have made the first presentation of this paper a lively one.

Light Railways 2001, nos 157,158,159

Light railways have been used in a whole range of Australian industries: sugar, mining, construction and of course timber. The industrial focus varies from issue to issue, but there are always items of interest to forest and regional historians. One is reminded on looking through this lavishly illustrated and impeccably produced magazine, just how much timber was used in all these railways, and just how well made they were. Many of the so-called simple bushmen were in fact highly skilled construction workers. An article by Lindsay Witham on the tramways built for the construction of the Waddamana hydro-electric power station in Tasmania in 1910 caught my eye. It

was 25 kilometres long and judging from the photos, the sleepers seem to have been so close together as to provide almost a 'corduroy road' on which the wooden rails were laid. A sawmill was set up at the middle of the route and construction proceeded from this to the start and finish.

It would be an interesting exercise to work with our Light Railways colleagues to calculate just how much wood was used in some of these constructions.



Garden History 2001, vol 12, no. 4.

Like *Light Railways*, this is a beautifully produced magazine. It carries articles with a landscape focus as well as those on garden design. This issue has two articles on Churchill Island in Victoria's Westernport Bay covering the settlement, the homestead gardens and the distinctive moonahs, *Melaleuca lanceolata* spp. *lanceolata*, which form such distinctive stands along the shore. It is certainly a magazine to be enjoyed.

The Australian Garden History Society has its office in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, Victoria 3141. See its web site for details: www.vicnet.net.au/~aghs

Australian Mining History Association

The Australian Mining History Association is to have its seventh annual conference in Kalgoorlie in September in conjunction with the Australian Historical Association's regional meeting.

The idea of holding a meeting in association with a meeting of a like-minded organisation is one which might prove fruitful for the Australian Forest History Society. It would enable members of both to share the programme of each and would be economical in travelling costs for anyone wanting to go to the meeting of both organisations. It was effective for a IUFRO Forest History meeting which 'piggy-backed' on a Pacific Science Congress.

Canadian forest history

The Forest History Association of British Columbia publishes a newsletter and holds annual meetings. We were pleased to receive copies of their sixty-third newsletter. They have articles about replanting during the interwar period by some MacMillan Bloedel's predecessor companies. Their annual general meeting in June is to be held in Port Alberni and will include a visit to the McLean Mill National Historic Site. This site is operated by the Western Vancouver Island Industrial Heritage Society. They have details at:

http://www.alberniheritage.com/mclean_mill_national_historic_site.html

Some of the BC Association's members are collaborating on a work about the career of a notable forester, Fred Mulholland. Interestingly, they have found a publisher which produces their books 'on demand' and sells them over the internet.

The US-based Forest History Society (FHS) has always collected information on the environmental history of Canada. In order to highlight that data and make it more easily accessible, the FHS has recently added a Canada section to its web pages at:

<http://www.lib.duke.edu/forest/fhscanada.html>.

European environmental history

The first international conference of the European Society for Environmental History will be held in St Andrews, Scotland on 5-9 September this year. An exciting programme has been arranged with over 100 papers on a whole range of both specifically European and general topics. Our good friend, Donald Hughes, will give the opening plenary lecture on 'Europe's role in world environmental history'. John Dargavel is planning to attend.

Library resources

The specialist libraries of forestry organisations contain important sources for forest historians, especially the so-called 'grey literature' of reports, surveys and newsletters which never find their way into State or national libraries.

Several of the collections have been relocated during the organisational upheavals of recent years, changing objectives have not always included their preservation, and cost pressures have forced reductions of services.

CSIRO's Division of Forestry and Forest Products has one of the major collections in its library at Yarralumula. It dates from the late 1920s when the Commonwealth established the Forestry and Timber Bureau. It contains some older material and material from all States and Territories. An assessment of the current library services is being undertaken as a basis for forward planning and comments have been sought. In response, the Society has stressed the particular importance of the older material and the need for a professional assessment of the collection.

The Department of Forestry in The Australian National University is to close its Departmental library later this year. Part of this collection will be transferred to the University's general collection. It is likely that much of the 'grey literature' will have to be disposed. The academic staff (including your editor) are assessing the collection to ensure that the most valuable material is transferred. The Forestry Department is to be merged with the Department of Geography and Human Ecology to create a School of Resources, Environment and Society headed by Professor Peter Kanowski. Forestry education will continue in the new School.

Future eating and country keeping: what role has environmental history in the management of biodiversity?

David Bowman from the Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management Northern Territory University, gave the Rudi Lemberg Lecture with this title in Canberra on 9 May 2001. It was sponsored by the Australian Academy of Science. The stimulating and provocative address led to an extended discussion.

Abstract:

In order to understand and moderate the effects of the accelerating rate of global environmental change land managers and ecologists must not only think beyond their local environment but also put their problems into an historical context. It is intuitively obvious that historians should be natural allies of ecologists and

land managers as they struggle to maintain biodiversity and landscape health. Indeed, 'environmental history' is an emerging field where the previously disparate intellectual traditions of ecology and history intersect to create a new and fundamentally interdisciplinary field of inquiry. Environmental history is rapidly becoming an important field displacing many older environmentally focused academic disciplines as well as capturing the public imagination.

By drawing on Australian experience I explore the role of 'environmental history' in managing biodiversity. First I consider some of the similarities and differences of the ecological and historical approaches to the history of the environment. Then I review two central questions in Australian environmental history: landscape-scale changes in woody vegetation cover since European settlement and the extinction of the marsupials in both historic and prehistoric time. These case studies demonstrate that environmental historians can reach conflicting interpretations despite using essentially the same data.

The popular success of some environmental histories hinges on the fact that they narrate a compelling story concerning human relationships and human value judgements about landscape change. Ecologists must learn to harness the power of environmental history narratives to bolster land management practices designed to conserve biological heritage. They can do this by using various currently popular environmental histories as a point of departure for future research, for instance by testing the veracity of competing interpretations of landscape-scale change in woody vegetation cover. They also need to learn how to write parables that communicate their research findings to land managers and the general public. However, no matter how sociologically or psychologically satisfying a particular environmental historical narrative might be, it must be willing superseded with new stories that incorporate the latest research discoveries and that reflects changing social values of nature. It is contrary to a rational and publicly acceptable approach to land management to read a particular story as revealing the absolute truth.

STOP PRESS – To be released in July

*Perfumed Pineries: Environmental History of
Australia's Callitris Forests*

Edited by

John Dargavel, Diane Hart and Brenda Libbis

Published by

Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies,
The Australian National University, Canberra

Book review

Stephen Dovers (Ed). 2000. *Environmental History and Policy: Still Settling Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press. 306 pp. ISBN 0-19-550749-5 RRP: A\$39.95 NZ\$49.95

Reviewed by John Dargavel*

It is the sub-title, 'Still settling Australia', that so catches the imagination. Are we really *still* settling Australia? What does it mean? Surely the land is fully occupied by now? Haven't we passed colonialism? Are 'we' only the settlers, new arrivals, migrants like myself, colonists? What is it that we have to do to have finished settling, to belong? Peter Read argues passionately in *Belonging*, that 'we the settlers' have to be reconciled with 'we the Aborigines' who were so devastatingly unsettled—and *vice versa*—before we can be 'we the people'.¹ To be reconciled, we have to both understand and act. So too with the environment. As Dovers puts it, ecology has come to unsettle the Australian mind as much as technical and market changes have come to physically and psychologically unsettle the old settler certainties of rural Australia. Clearly, we have to be reconciled with our environment—and it to us—if we are to belong enduringly; we have to understand and we have to act.

This spirit pervades both environmental history generally and this collection of thirteen Australian essays. Problems are a pressing and the 'lessons of environmental history' are to be studied as soldiers once studied past battles. Stephen Dovers, in his introductory chapter, certainly feels that 'environmental history can indeed inform contemporary policy' and this proposition is variously explored in the subsequent chapters. Dovers seems almost to equate 'policy' with 'action' and he feels that better policies may be devised if past policy failures are displayed. To me this is overly optimistic. 'Policies' are not just created *ab initio* in the great, grey isolated bureaucracies, well meaning and amenable to the gentle persuasion of this book though they may be. Hard economic interests and social forces pummel the body politic to produce, implement or conveniently ignore even the most enlightened policies.

The essays are grouped. In the first group are overviews by the ever engaging and assertive Eric Rolls and Joe Powell, the latter writing on the happily phrased 'geographical imagination' of ordering Australia's waters to settler purposes. Powell too is

lary about the 'search for policy' and warns that we should not 'expect the past to serve the present too directly. In the next group are three essays on scientific understandings including a fine chapter by David Lindenmayer on forest history. The third group explores community involvement in environmental problems and their management through education, preparing community histories and in museums.

These groups have many engaging chapters, but it is the last group on 'history, law and policy', containing four chapters by Tim Bonyhady, John Bradsen, John Holmes and Michael Quinn, that address Dovers' proposition most directly. Quinn writes on the Western Division of New South Wales. He traces how public policy and administration reacted to fears in the 1890s that the pastoral industry there might collapse due to overgrazing, the plague of rabbits, the invasion of woody weeds, drought, sand drifts and other factors. A lengthy Royal Commission led to legislation in 1901 and reform in the administration of pastoral leases. But it was not enough and inquiries in the 1930s and 1980s heard similar stories of continuing environmental degradation. Yet Quinn always sees that the 'capacity for imagination and will to change' must be recognised if change is to be achieved.

Holmes, in a masterly paper, also examines the pastoral lease system, brought sharply to national attention in 1996 by the High Court's decision in the Wik case. He brings out the essential co-existence of multiple uses, users and values in natural resources, and he stresses the need for the capacity to redesign leasehold tenures to deal with their complexity, a capacity he contrasts with the recent push to enhance leaseholders rights against those of the environment or the public.

Bonyhady exhumes the use of the legal concept of 'public trust' as a duty of government from two cases that came before the Australian courts in the nineteenth century. Bradsen is most explicit in addressing Dovers' question. His focus is on law, and in much of the chapter on the common law. He claims that the Australian practice of leasing public lands subject to conditions, was not only unique but expressed a notion of the obligation of landholders to act in the public interest. Yet land degradation continued in spite of state soil conservation programmes from the 1930s and more particularly from the 1950s. Bradsen's is a most thought-provoking chapter in a rich collection which will engage everyone interested in Australia's environmental history.

* This is a shortened version of a review submitted to the electronic discussion network H-ANZAU

¹ Peter Read 2000. *Belonging*. Cambridge University Press.

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, ☎ 02 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. ☎ 08-09 380 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 Franklin 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, ☎ 03 6336 5384 email: deniseg@fpb.tas.gov.au, or

John Dargavel, ☎ (02) 6258 9102 email: foresthistory@asiaonline.net.au

International

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

5-9 September 2001, St Andrews, Scotland. *Environmental History: Problems and Potentials.* 1st International Conference of the European Society for Environmental History.

Contact: email: eseh@st-andrews.ac.uk http://www.stir.ac.uk/ceph/esehconference.htm

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 ☎ +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:

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

