

development of the state



MOUNT BARROW, NORTHERN TASMANIA

From John Taylor

In October 2006 Australian Forest Growers held its biennial conference in Launceston. While 320 delegates, 63 papers and 8 field trips indicated the vibrancy of the private and farm forestry sector, there were no papers dealing with historic aspects of the sector. (The history of the changes in community attitudes to forestry over the last three decades and government policy responses, which have lead to the rise of the private forestry sector, is a worthy subject.)

However one of the field tours spent three hours in State Forest on Mount Barrow, 25 km north east of Launceston, exploring the Mount Barrow Discovery Trail.

The Discovery Trail is a 24 km long drive through a forest that has been harvested from about 1940. The Trail is largely the result of the vision and energy of one man, Andy Padgett, who began work in the forest in the early 1940s.

The trail is designed to show visitors the relics of logging - sawmill sites, tramlines, log landings, roads, workmen's huts - and also its impact on the forest - the regrowth stands of *Eucalyptus delegatensis* and *E. obliqua* along with retained rainforest of myrtle beech along the main gullies.

Walking tracks to the sites allow visitors to experience the forest first hand and appreciate the difficulty of living and working in this rocky country in the days before modern trucks and bulldozers became available.

An attractive new visitor centre in the forest tells the stories of the timber industry on Mount Barrow, including those of the families who lived and worked there, the changes in logging and road building since the 1940s, and the biodiversity of the forest. Logging continues in the forest.

The cover photograph shows a restored workmen's hut which was on the edge of a log landing. Diesel-powered winches dragged the logs onto the landing and a converted bren gun carrier loaded the trucks. As is evident in the photograph, the landing now supports a dense stand of *E. delegatensis*.

AUSTRALIAN FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY AGM 2006

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Forest History Society Inc. was held at the Forestry Building, Australian National University, on 28th November 2006. The main items from the meeting were:

- The 2005-06 committee was re-elected for another year. Office-bearers are: Brett Stubbs (Pres.), Paul Star (V. Pres.), Kevin Frawley (Sec.) and Fintán Ó Laighin (Treas.).
- It was resolved to keep the subscription at the current rate (\$25 for Australian members, \$15 for students, \$30 for overseas). The possibility of a Senior/Pensioner concession was raised but was deferred for further consideration. To encourage new memberships in New Zealand, it was agreed that anyone who joined or renewed at the 2007 conference could pay NZ\$30 rather than A\$30.
- The Treasurer presented his audited report, which shows the Society comfortably "in the black". Part of the positive balance is an amount yet to be paid for work by Mark Butz on the Conservation Management Plan for Blundells Flat in the ACT (AFHS has operated as the sponsoring body for this project). As at 30th June 2006, the Society had 65 financial members, one life member, and quite a number of lapsed memberships. The meeting conveyed its thanks to the honorary auditor Stephen Bailey who saves the Society a substantial sum in audit fees.
- The President's report highlighted the symposium on the *History of the Araucaria Forests* held in conjunction with the IUFRO Conference in Brisbane in August 2005, the forthcoming 2007 conference in New Zealand, newsletter production, and the Society's new website. The help of CRES (ANU), Patrick Stein and Libby Robin in operating the old site was acknowledged.
- A report by Paul Star on progress with organisation of the 2007 conference was presented to the meeting.
- Sue Feary reported on newsletter production noting that editors had to be sought out for recent editions. It was suggested that all the previous newsletters be scanned and placed on the Society's website. The webmaster would be approached regarding the costs of doing this.

Following the meeting the relevant documentation (e.g. names and addresses of committee and the financial statement) is lodged with the ACT Registrar General's Office, which is a requirement for incorporated organisations.



TRANS TASMAN FOREST HISTORY CONFERENCE: UPDATE

Convenor Paul Star writes:

Having just been one among 300 at a conference where I had eight minutes (and no discussion time) to describe three years' research, I doubly appreciate what's so good about AFHS conferences! Those attending the Trans-Tasman Forest History Conference in Christchurch (29th January to 2nd February) can expect a "single stream" of three dozen or so papers on a broad range of allied topics, with half an hour for each presentation and discussion and reasonable tea breaks.

We've got renowned New Zealand ecologist/historian Geoff Park lined up to give a keynote speech, and a couple of experts to talk about Riccarton Bush and Banks Peninsula before our field trips to these places. The post-conference West Coast study tour (3rd to 5th February) has already attracted enough support mostly from Australian visitors - to be assured of success.

The programme is now in draft form and will appear on the AFHS website in December. Keep an eye on the website for any further updates and details.

A TRIBUTE TO LINDSAY PRYOR

From Sue Feary

The Australian Forestry History Society was well represented at a recent event in Canberra to commemorate Professor Lindsay Pryor's contribution to our knowledge and appreciation of Australia's treed landscape. The venue was the delightful Lindsay Pryor National Arboretum on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin.

Lindsay Pryor commenced plantings here in the 1950s, realising Walter Burley Griffin's vision for a "continental arboretum" in the western part of the lake. The 26 hectare wooded park contains large groves comprising more than fifty native and exotic tree species and we learnt from the speeches that there are plans for expansions. During a short tour led by local forester John Gray we noticed evidence of damage from the 2003 bushfires but we were assured that the "Friends of the ACT Arboreta" are preparing themselves for some hard work clearing fallen branches.

About 30 people attended the ceremony on 4th December 2006 when a plaque was unveiled to pay tribute to a person who must rank as one of the great inspirations for our Society.

VALE DAVID RYAN

Well known Society member David Ryan died on 31st October 2006. In his later years David lived at Boambee near Coffs Harbour. He was an active member of the Society and regularly attended conferences. He had a passionate interest in changes to the Australian landscape since the arrival of Europeans. David will be missed by his colleagues in the Society.

AN EARLIER RESOURCES BOOM

Gold mining in Central Victoria in the 1880s generated an enormous demand for mining timbers, placing pressures on the forest and its guardians as shown by this letter.

D.E. Martin Esq	Creswick
Sec for Agriculture	December 15, 1883
Sir	

I have the honour to report that had two cases before the Ballaarat City Court yesterday, one against Thomas Wyatt and the other against George Heintz both of Dead Horse for cutting saplings in the State Forest

I gave evidence that I saw the defendant Wyatt cutting saplings on the 19th November last in the State Forest and I produced the proclamation and the plan under seal to shew the place where I had caught him cutting the saplings. Mr Hardy counsel for the defendant in his cross examination asked me whether I had surveyed the boundaries of the Forest? I replied that I had followed the boundaries according to the plan. He then raised a technical objection that unless I could swear that I had surveyed the boundaries according to Gazette 5th April 1872 p. 682 proclaiming the block a State Forest I could not prove that this man was cutting in the State Forest the case was dismissed, the Bench being of the opinion that I should know where all the pegs of the Forest are, and in many cases this is impossible as the pegs have disappeared and the trenches have been filled up on account of the traffic and the mining that has been going on in this portion of the forest for years past

Lately the Magistrates have intimated that they intend in future to inflict heavier penalties and they (the prop cutters) are trying their utmost to get clear. I also notice that I labour under a great disadvantage in being pitted against some of the best legal counsel that can be procured in Ballaarat in having to act both as prosecutor and witness especially when technical objections are raised

I am, sir Your most obedient servant J. La Gerche, Forester

Reproduced in: *A Forester's Log, The Story of John La Gerche and the Ballarat-Creswick State Forest 18821897,* Angela Taylor, MUP 1998.



BOOK REVIEW

Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars, Nigel Turvey, Carindale, Queensland: Interactive Publications 2006. ISBN 9781876819354: 1 876819 35 9. pp.190. RRP \$28.

Reviewed by John Dargavel

If we had to pick the moment when "scrub" became "rainforest", it would probably be in August 1979 when a dispute about logging 77 hectares of forest at Terania Creek in northern New South Wales grabbed national attention on the nightly news. What started as a minor, local incident escalated into a major confrontation and a political crisis for the State Government that dragged on for three years. What had been "scrub" where loggers worked, became "rainforest" where environmentalists demonstrated. In the public market of ideas, the older scientific term, "rainforest", became a brand for environmental campaigns and eventually a legal category.

In *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars,* Nigel Turvey explores the original dispute from which so much followed. This is a worthwhile journey, because only one side of the story is told in the previous accounts written by the environmental participants. Turvey has the advantages of not being a participant and of coming later. Of course, like any author, he writes from his own perspective, but his is one of wide experience as a forester and environmental scientist. He is sympathetic both to the environmentalist perspective seeing the rainforest as "a spiritual landscape" - and to the timber workers' perspective. Apart from Ian Watson's *Fighting over the Forests* (Allen & Unwin 1990), little attention has been given to the latter.

The strength of the book comes from the 26 face-to-face interviews that Turvey conducted between December 2003 and July 2004. They are balanced between environmentalists and timber people, and include the former Premier, Neville Wran. The interviews enable him to tell the story of the conflict as seen by both sides. Short chapters move the reader along easily from one side to the other in the first half of the book, describing the various blockades, logging attempts, police actions and so forth.

The second half of the book deals with the drawn out processes by which the Government attempted to settle the situation. The most important of these was the long public Inquiry conducted by Justice Isaacs. While this was going on, other environmental disputes were erupting. In the end, it all had to be settled politically. Wran no doubt had his eye on the polls and may have also been influenced by his wife Jill. In October 1982, the State Cabinet decided to ban rainforest logging and the transition from "scrub" to "rainforest" was completed.

A good book always makes you want to know more. Turvey reports from his interviews what the various participants did and thought at the time, but a quarter of a century has passed. What has happened to them? How do they reflect now on what they did then? Turvey reveals the contrasting cultures and beliefs of the time, but have they changed or have they congealed with age? We can hope that he will make a return journey to investigate such questions.

Don't be put off reading *Terania Creek: Rainforest Wars* by the miserly margins with which the text has been set on the page, or by the unfortunate use of an honorific "Dr" on the cover. It is a well researched and written book that makes a useful addition to Australian forest history.

NEW PUBLICATION

Peter Davies has a new publication released in the British Archaeological Report series: BAR S1558 2006: *Studies in Contemporary and Historical Archaeology 2* **Henry's Mill: The Historical Archaeology of a Forest Community** Life around a timbermill in southwestern Victoria in the early 20th century. ISBN 1841719889. £33. Available from Archaeopress - www.archaeopress.com.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

As If For a Thousand Years: A History of Victoria's Land Conservation and Environment Councils, Danielle Clode, Victorian Environment Assessment Council, 2006, \$19.95 (available from Melbourne University Bookshop).

This is a detailed history (200 pages) of these Councils that make recommendations to government on the use and management of public land in Victoria. That there is in 2006 a VEAC, the descendant of the original LCC set up in 1971, is testament of the success of these bodies in delivering useful service to different governments and through changing social and economic conditions. In Victoria the contest between timber harvesting and park use was largely played out in these councils. As John Landy points out in his Foreword, it is surprising that such a successful approach to resolving land use conflicts was not emulated in other states.

The Still Burning Bush, Stephen Pyne, Scribe Short Books, 2006, \$22.

This book traces the environmental and social significance of how fire has been used to shape the environment through Australian history, beginning with Aboriginal usage and then the passing of the firestick to rural colonists and then to foresters. It traces the long public debate over how fire should be used and managed, and about how we should live on this inflammable continent. This is a very readable account by an author who brings a global perspective to the topic.



Wooden Wonders: Victoria's Timber Bridges, Don Chambers, Hyland House Publishing for the National Trust of Victoria, 2006, \$49.95.

This book is at once a narrative of the history of timber bridges, an exploration of the development of road and rail transport, a showcase of Australian design ingenuity and a regional Victorian field guide. It reveals the beauty of simple structures and the durability and strength of Australian hardwoods. The history of the bridges is complemented by a fascinating account of the evolution of the design and construction of these large timber structures as early engineers in rail and road departments learned how to use the eucalypt timbers. The book has wonderful photographs and drawings.

Silent Sentinels, Peter Holzworth, DPI Forestry, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Brisbane, 2006

From Brett Stubbs

In order to protect Queensland's public forests from fire, a network of towers, cabins and lookouts has been established. More than 130 timber and steel observation structures have been constructed since the 1930s, and those that remain are an important component of the state's cultural heritage.

In this book forester and forest historian Peter Holzworth tells the story of Queensland's forest fire towers. It is profusely illustrated and describes the construction and operation of observation towers within the context of the history of fire protection in Queensland. It includes a photographic catalogue of nearly one hundred structures, ranging from simple cabins and decks erected on mountain peaks to others perched atop complex and ingenious towers more than 40 metres tall.

Oak - the Frame of Civilization, William Bryant Logan, WW Norton and Company (distributed in Australia by Wiley) 2006, 320pp, \$24.95 (paperback).

Professional arborist and award-winning nature writer William Bryant Logan deftly relates the delightful history of the reciprocal relationship between humans and oak trees since time immemorial - a profound link that has almost been forgotten. From the ink of Bach's cantatas, to the first boat to reach the New World, to the wagon, the barrel, and the sword, oak trees have been a constant presence throughout our history. In fact, civilization prospered where oaks grew, and for centuries these supremely adaptable, generous trees have supported humankind in nearly every facet of life.

Particularly fascinating is a chapter on balanoculture - societies which use acorns as a dietary staple (after

leaching the tannin from them). Logan combines science, philosophy, spirituality, and history with a curiosity about why the natural world works the way it does.

Logan may overstate his case - a more balanced view of human history may attach a similar importance to a host of plants - but the diversity and ubiquity of oaks in the northern hemisphere makes them worthy of a book such as this.

From New Zealand

'Doomed Timber'; Towards an Environmental History of Seaward Forest, in Ballantyne, T. and Bennett, J. (eds.) Landscape/Community Perspectives from New Zealand History, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2005, pp.17-29.

State Forest Conservation and the New Zealand Landscape; Origins and Influences, 1950-1914, Beattie, J. and Star, P. in Ballantyne, T. and Bennett, J. (eds.) Landscape/Community Perspectives from New Zealand History, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2005, pp.31-41.

W.L. Lindsay, Scottish Environmentalist and the 'Improvement ' of Nineteenth Century New Zealand, Beattie, J. in Ballantyne, T. and Bennett, J. (eds.) Landscape/Community Perspectives from New Zealand History, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2005, pp. 43-56.

RECENT JOURNALS

From John Dargavel

Environmental History 11(4), October 2006

I imagine this 340-page issue of *Environmental History* landing with a thump on the mat for those subscribers who live in countries where the postman pushes mail through a slot in the front door, but as I carry it in from my letter box I am surprised at its weight. Enough of such nostalgic whimsy, lets open it! A good issue. Sometimes it is all parochial American stuff without any resonance to my interests, but this is a good read.

Bill Rollins has a piece "Reflections on a spare tire" based on pictures of the tyre covers on the backs of 4-wheel drives. He carries on a bit deconstructing the pictures, as post-modernists do, but I'll look at the horrid things in a new light in future. Then there is a paper about the exclusion of Aboriginal people from Canadian national parks. Now there's a topic that would be interesting to compare with Australia!

Next is a paper about forestry under the Vichy Government which contributes to the recent literature



about forests and war. And last is a paper by Jane Carruthers on the politics of environmental history in South Africa. Many members will remember her from our conference in Queensland and some may have heard her present this paper in Sydney last year. Although the context of the paper is South African, the issues about the inherent political problems of writing environmental history are ones that we too wrestle with. She suggests that there are "rich opportunities for comparative, transnational environmental histories". Exactly so. We are just about to explore them in Christchurch.

As usual there are plenty of book reviews. This issue includes one by Donald Hughes on Mark Elvin's *The retreat of the elephants: an environmental history of China.* It also includes a review of *Environmentality, technologies of government and the making of subjects* by Arun Agarwal (Duke University Press, 2005) that concludes, "This is a rare work that combines the longer view with a sense of the immediate and the intimate. Its resonances and consequences will occupy scholars, students, and citizens for some time to come."

Environment and History, 12(3), August 2006

Another good read. The 120-page British-based journal is not quite so overwhelming as *Environmental History* and its four papers are directly relevant to us. The first by Peter Griggs is a study of soil conservation techniques in the Queensland sugar industry from the 1930s until recently. The second by Kirsty Douglas is about geological heritage in Australia and the third by Philippa Wells is about rabbits in New Zealand. Although the fourth is set in Britain and Ireland, it concerns the escape of a garden plant to become a forest weed. Certainly a familiar theme to us, but this is the case of rhododendrons.

DEATH OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Tree of Knowledge was one to the main attractions (along with many large old wooden pubs) of the central Queensland town of Barcaldine. The tree is famous as the location of meetings of shearers during the great strikes of 1891. The strikers were broken by the government and 13 leaders were gaoled. The labour movement realised that in order to achieve their aims they needed political rather than industrial power, and this lead ultimately to the formation of the Australian Labour Party. The tree's fame is due to its links to these early developments in Australian democracy.

About 30 litres of poison were poured onto the tree's roots and despite attempts to save it the old tree died. In the early 1990s the tree had shown signs of poor vigour and the Forest Service had successfully propagated it from a cutting. The young tree was planted in the Workers' Heritage Centre in Barcaldine on Labour Day 2005.

CONFERENCES

IUFRO Conference in Thessaloniki (September 2007)

On behalf of the IUFRO 6.07.00 research group Forest History, we invite you to participate in the International Conference on Forest and Woodland History - *Woodland Cultures in Time and Space: tales from the past, messages for the future* - taking place in Thessaloniki, Greece, 3-7 September 2007.

The conference is open to all those interested in trees, woodlands, forests and their cultural, social and economic values. We welcome researchers working in the fields of forest and woodland history, environmental history, historical and cultural geography and social anthropology or anybody who feels his/her research is connected to woodland cultures.

You can register with the conference website in order to express an interest of attendance and/or to submit an abstract. The Call for Papers will close on 26th January 2007.

For more information visit the conference website: www.uec.ac.uk/geography/woodlandculturesconferen ce.php or contact Dr Eirini Saratsi at e.saratsi@exeter.ac.uk or Prof Charles Watkins at charles.watkins@nottingham.ac.uk.

Furniture History (March 2007)

The inaugural *National Furniture History Symposium* will be held at the National Museum of Australia (NMA) in Canberra on 24th and 25th March 2007. It will offer an opportunity for people interested in furniture and its history to share in current expert knowledge.

The content will cover a broad cross-section of interests in furniture history, including:

- Ruth Lane Poole Australian furniture and interior designer;
- The impact forestry and CSIRO have had on the furniture industry in the early 20th century;
- Indian influences on colonial Australian furniture;
- Walter Burley Griffin, furniture and city architect;
- First Fleet table and furniture of the NMA; and
- Chinese cabinet makers in colonial Australia.

The symposium is being organised by volunteers from the Furniture History Society with the support of the Friends of the NMA.

For further information go to

www.furniturehistory.org.au or ring Greg Peters or Jim Kennedy on 0414 710 573 or 0418 449 655 respectively.



Historical Geographers (August 2006)

At the 13th International Conference of Historical Geographers held in Hamburg from 20th to 24th August 2006 there were several presentations of interest to forest historians:

Buckley, G. and Korth, K. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and the Leakin Park Controversy

Kudoh, K. Succession of secondary forest vegetation in Fujioko

Prudham, S. Class, Politics and Post-war forest regulation in British Columbia, Canada

Tankskanen, M. Behind the Visible Finnish Peatland Landscape

Young, T. To see God in the original; W.H.H. Murray and the origins of American Camping

For more information on the conference go to: www.geowiss.uni-hamburg.de/igeogr/ICHG2006.html.

SOUTH EAST FORESTS: A Natural History

From John Blay

(Beginning with a quote from R.H. Tawney: "Every *historian needs a stout pair of boots.*")

After I moved home to spotted gum forest near Bermagui in 1970 I became more and more involved in the life of the forests of Australia's south east. They featured in books, poems and plays I was writing.

In 1980 I received the Parks Writer's Award to spend twelve months in the wild country of the newly proclaimed Deua and Wadbilliga National Parks. I walked zigzag fashion along the coastal range, finding amongst other things a new species of bipinnate acacia with silvery blue foliage that grew to over thirty metres. It was named Acacia blayana. By the time I had completed the book of my eye-opening adventures, the battles for the Tantawangalo and Coolangubra were well under way. But after they were over and the SE Forests National Park was proclaimed, my interest kept growing. The Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process fascinated me. I talked to conservationists, loggers, Kooris, scientists. By the late 1990s I was making preparations and in 2001, with the aid of a National History Research award and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), I set off from Bermagui to explore the region on foot. My aim was to find what's there and how it came to be that way.

My SE Forests ran from Bermagui inland to Kosciuszko and then back to the coast near Point Hicks. It took two years of walking to cover the country adequately and then three more years of further walks and research. I was especially interested in the Aboriginal presence and it seemed best, before I started on the natural history book, to write one about the old people and first contact. That is just about finished now and I'm ready to start on the natural history. Wish me luck.

John Blay SE Forests Project 43A Ross Road Queanbeyan NSW 2620 sefproject@netspeed.com.au

There may be members of the Society with information or views that would assist John.

RESEARCH REQUEST - MUMMEL GULF

The Walcha Area office of the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (formerly the National Parks and Wildlife Service) is compiling stories from the forest occupation action that took place at Mummel Gulf in 1992 in what is now Mummel Gulf National Park by members of the North-East Forest Alliance.

Mummel Gulf is approximately 45 km to the south-east of Walcha in Northern NSW. DEC is interested in collecting stories from anyone who may have participated in the action or was involved in some other way.

The information will be used to produce a history of the events that took place and will hopefully be available to the public through the DEC internet site. The history may also be used to provide on ground information at New Country Swamp camping area.

If you were involved you can help us by completing an on-line form about your participation at www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/so cial_history_form. You can put as much or as little information as you want into the form. Alternatively you can contact the Ranger and he can send you out a questionnaire:

Neil Reckord Department of Environment and Conservation 188W North Street Walcha NSW 2354 Tel: (02) 6777 4724

DEC staff or a historian may interview a small number of people to find out additional information. We are also interested in collecting copies of photos from this period.





CHARLES AND RUTH LANE POOLE WEB SITE

A new entry covering the life and work of both Charles and Ruth Lane Poole has been opened on the National Archives of Australia's "Uncommon Lives" web site at www.uncommonlives.naa.gov.au.

The series aims to show how records in the National Archives can be used to examine the history of people or topics. Charles Lane Poole was the Commonwealth's first forester while Ruth was commissioned to design the furniture and interiors for The Lodge and Government House when they were first opened in 1927. The site deals with the period 1922 to 1945 when Charles worked for the Commonwealth in Papua, New Guinea, Melbourne and Canberra. He had previously worked in South Africa, Sierra Leone and Western Australia.

The content was written by John Dargavel who identified the relevant files which were digitised in their entirety. There are links from the story to the digitised files, so that anybody can read not just highlighted quotes, but the whole file.

TWO MESSAGES FROM SUE FEARY

The next issue of the newsletter is due in April 2007 and I would love to hear from members interested in being guest editor. The guidelines permit editors to be creative and to focus on favourite topics, so don't miss a great opportunity!

Also, the Society would like to make all back issues of the newsletter available on our new website. There are about 30 issues that need to be scanned and if possible turned into PDF files. Are there any scanner-owning members who would be willing to undertake this task?

If you can help with either of the above requests please contact me at sue.feary@anu.edu.au or on (02) 6125 3628 (bh).

Membership of the Australian Forest History

Society (AFHS) Inc is \$25 a year, or \$15 a year for students. For overseas addressees, it is \$30 (**in Australian currency please**). These prices do not include GST as the AFHS is not registered for paying or claiming GST. Membership expires on 30th June each year.

Payment can be made by cheque or money order, or through Electronic Funds Transfer.

Cheques or Money Orders should be made payable to the AFHS and sent to:

Australian Forest History Society Inc. PO Box 5128 Kingston ACT 2604

Electronic Funds Transfer can be paid into:

Commonwealth Savings Bank BSB 062911 Account No.: 1010 1753

(Please also return this form if you pay by EFT.)

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