
AUSTRALIAN

Forest History

SOCIETY Inc.

Newsletter No. 49
June 2008

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



Looking Good - Some of the participants at *The Future of the Past: A Symposium on Environmental and Forest History*, held at the Australian National University in Canberra on Friday 9th May 2008 to celebrate 20 years of collaboration between the Australian Forest History Society and the Fenner School of Environment and Society.

Guest Editors: *Fintán Ó Laighin & Juliana Lazzari*

Newsletter Editor: *Sue Feary*

AFHS Address: PO Box 5128, KINGSTON ACT 2604

Web: www.foresthistory.org.au

Fintan.OLaighin@daff.gov.au &
Juliana.Lazzari@daff.gov.au
Sue.Feary@environment.nsw.gov.au

ISSN 1033-937 X



NEW ZEALAND FOREST HISTORY - IS IT BEING LOST?

The New Zealand Institute of Forestry (NZIF) e-mails a weekly newsletter to its members. A recent issue (No. 2008/19, 23rd May 2008) included a guest article that proposes the establishment of a forest history group in New Zealand. The NZIF website is at <http://rafe.co.nz>. Thanks to Andrew Wilson from DAFF for forwarding this for the AFHS Newsletter.

Guest Comment: Timberlands and Forest History

Well Timberlands West Coast Ltd will pass into history soon, to join its predecessors the NZ Forestry Corporation and the NZ Forest Service. Luckily for us the "forests" of the West Coast will go on forever! New managers and systems will come to plan anew. And the memories of those who served in these prestigious organisations will swirl around local communities, and pass down family generations until time dims these images, sounds and smells of the forest, mill or transport mode. But is this enough? Over 100 years of forest history and where can we find it? Who are the custodians? Where are the archives? How will we plan well for the future if we cannot remember the past!

I have watched the demise of Forest Service record systems and artefacts, shifted building to building, picked over, damaged and lost. Certainly some has gone to archives; a Department of Conservation store room has fabulous black and white images of forestry people, and explorer Charlie Douglas' original hand-drawn map of the forests of South Westland still survives. But how much of the maps, photos, scientific records and anecdotal information can still be found or appreciated? Apart from the real physical loss of our historic assets, our NZ system of constant governmental and organisational change has meant the absolute waste of millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds so expended. Gold and Coal histories are well catered for on the West Coast, but no public Forestry Archive.

Piled in other sheds at Timberlands are the records of that "Grand Design Plan for Sustainably Managing our Public West Coast Beech and Rimu Forest", the work of some of our best "foresters", so professional that it almost came to pass. Luckily some is summarised in a 2000 Report of the Independent Review Panel on the Conservation Values of its Indigenous Forests. Worth its weight in Kauri! But this does not include the silvicultural record systems developed or the invaluable mapping base.

Many have expressed interest in starting a Forest History Society or Group, maybe within the Institute. But how might we succeed, where others have failed. Something radical is needed. Why not a "Bottom Up" organisational system to kick-start it? Like the internet - seamless and placeless. Let the Institute set up a registration list and a start-up newsletter. Some computer boffin could set up a basic access based inter-relational record system. Individuals or groups sign up their own forest history projects, when they are ready.

I am sure the Putaruru Forestry Museum will join, as will Bogor's sawmill history group of friends in Pukemanu. Who will check the National Archives? Where is John Johns' photo list? Can you scan historic forest maps, seek some funding, or donate prizes for best history story? Start now before you become history yourself. Sow the seeds!

Michael Orchard, NZIF Full Member, Westland

STILL ON NEW ZEALAND

Forest, the Timber Industry, and Conservation On Line in New Zealand

Te Ara, the official New Zealand On line Encyclopaedia, is well worth looking at for forests and forestry related information about New Zealand. There are, for instance, good sections on the human impact on the environment which are well supported by maps and photos. The timber industry and forest management are other sections. In addition, it is possible to link to regional essays which include comment on the place of forests. Making use of the possibilities of being on line, the entries are supplemented by some video and audio material as well as visual material that can be navigated through, for example the Kauri Timber Company Catalogue, several pages of which the reader can browse. See www.teara.govt.nz.

Michael Roche

FOREST HISTORY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

At the recent *Future of the Past Symposium*, the question of forest and forestry history in South Australia came up. The ForestrySA website has some pages on this, including a timeline that starts in 1873 with the "Forest Trees Planting Encouragement Bill" which sought to encourage tree planting in SA, a page on the early days of forestry and short biographies of the first two Conservators of Forests, John Ednie Brown (from 1878 to 1890) and Walter Gill (from 1890 to 1923). Brown published SA's first forest flora and treatise on tree planting, while Gill is commemorated by the Curly mallee (*Eucalyptus gillii*). These pages can be found at:

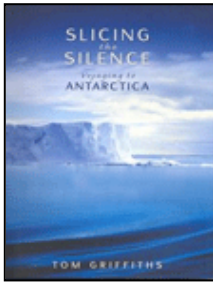
- * www.forestry.sa.gov.au/history.stm;
- * www.forestry.sa.gov.au/early.stm; and
- * www.forestry.sa.gov.au/conservators.stm.

The ForestrySA website also includes a brochure on the Historic Bundaleer Forest which is described as "The Birthplace of Australian Forestry":

"In 1875, 9000 hectares were proclaimed by the colonial government as South Australia's first Forest Reserve. Tasmanian blue gums, local red and sugar gums, and introduced oaks, ashes and sycamores, elms, walnuts, poplars and willows made up the first forest plantations in Australia."

The brochure is at www.forestry.sa.gov.au/bund.stm. It's a scan of a fold-out brochure, so on screen some bits are upside down, but it makes sense when it's printed. Bundaleer Forest is a few kilometres from Jamestown.

AFHS MEMBER WINS NSW PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARD



AFHS member **Tom Griffiths** has won one of the 2008 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Announced in mid-May, Tom won the "Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction" for his book *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* which was published by UNSW Press in May 2007.

In awarding the Prize, the judges described the book as "an impeccably researched, deeply felt, and elegantly made work of literary non-fiction, the outstanding work among this year's entries".

The full list of winners and the judges' comments can be read at

www.arts.nsw.gov.au/Portals/0/Lit%20and%20History%20Awards/PremiersLitAwards-2008Winners-comments.pdf.

Tom is a previous recipient of a Literary Award from the NSW Premier, having received the 1996 Book of the Year for *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*.

THE LOG SPLITTING GUN

A recent episode of ABC TV's *Collectors* (16th May 2008) featured a Log Splitting Gun as the Mystery Object. The photo and text below come from the program's website at www.abc.net.au/tv/collectors/txt/s2247579.htm.



The Mystery Object was sold as the "Log Splitting Gun" and these were used for splitting large tree butts (bigger than 1.5 metres) when there wasn't a saw available big enough to do the job. After a suitable tree had been felled the hollow, tapered end of the "gun" would be filled with black-powder and driven into the base of the tree butt with a sledge-hammer. It only needed to be driven in two or three inches. A fuse would be inserted in the hole on the side of the "gun" and then lit, the operator would then retire behind something big and wait for the bang. If he used the right amount of black-powder the tree butt would be nicely halved and he could repeat the operation and quarter it, breaking it down into something manageable. If too much black-powder was used the butt could be reduced to widely spread kindling.

There is no projectile used in the "gun", the tree was split by the shock-wave created by the expanding gases; crude but very effective. Apparently some "guns" had a loop welded on to them to enable the operator to attach a piece of cloth; making it easier to find the "gun" after the bang.

SAWMILLS AND TRAMWAYS IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND - FOREST INDUSTRY HERITAGE PLACES STUDY

In the late 1990s, the Australian Government funded a *Forest Industry Heritage Places Study: Sawmills and Tramways, South East Queensland*. The project was undertaken by John Kerr and overseen by Margaret Kowald, both of whom were AFHS members (Margaret still is, but John died in late 2003).

It is an extensive report - almost 350 pages - and is broken into 21 parts which can be downloaded as PDFs or Word documents. The Terms of Reference for the study are outlined in Section 1 as is the methodology. An overview is provided at Section 2, while other sections provide detailed accounts of the north, south, east and west of the study region:

- * Brisbane and South Brisbane Sawmills, Brisbane Suburbs, South Coast Sawmills and Logan and Albert River Valley Sawmills;
- * West to Ipswich and Toowoomba, the Fassifern Valley and Ranges, Brisbane Valley, Toowoomba and Northern Downs, Bunya Mountains and the Southern Darling Downs;
- * North of Brisbane, Near North and Coast Gympie and the Mary Valley; and
- * South Burnett and part of the Mary Valley, Maryborough, Isis and Fraser Island, Bundaberg, Gladstone and Boyne Valley and Outside the Study Area.

The report includes accounts of visits to a number of sites, and (as one tends to expect from consultancy reports) concludes with recommendations for further study.

The report is available on the website of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) - see

www.daff.gov.au/rfa/regions/qld/cultural-heritage/sawmills-tramways. The purpose of this article isn't to review the report, but rather to let members know that it is there, as government websites have a habit of being purged of old content. Having said that, there don't seem to be any plans to remove it.

TIMBER TRAMWAYS - LIGHT RAILWAY RESEARCH SOCIETY

And continuing the timber tramway theme, the Light Railway Research Society of Australia (LRSSA) is very active in its research and publication of studies into the timber tramways of Australia, some of which were written by John Kerr. (In fact, I understand that his study of the tramways of south east Queensland is being prepared for publication by the LRRSA. For more information, see www.lrrsa.org.au/LRR_TT.htm).

COVER STORY - THE FUTURE OF THE PAST: A SYMPOSIUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOREST HISTORY

On Friday 9th May 2008, to celebrate twenty years of collaboration, the Australian Forest History Society and the ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society held a Symposium on Environmental and Forest History. The venue - the Seminar Room in the Hancock Building at the ANU - was particularly appropriate as it was in that very room that the first national conference on Australia's forest history was held in May 1988.

The Symposium was organised jointly by AFHS Founding President, John Dargavel and Cameron Muir from the Fenner School. The day was structured around three themes - *Questions from Experience*, *New Directions* and *Opportunities and Needs*. It could perhaps be summed up as looking at the past to see where we're going.

Some of the speakers provided abstracts which are included at the end of this report. Two people on the original program were not able to make it in the end:

* **Sue Feary (ANU/NSW NPWS)**, *It's not just about fire: Aborigines and forests*; and

* **Tessa Mahony (ANU/Australian Government Department of the Environment)**, *History in the RFA process*.

After a welcoming address from **Professor Peter Kanowski (ANU)**, who also chaired the first session, **John Dargavel (ANU)** spoke about the diversity of fields and interests which have a connection with forest history, including geography, forestry and environment. In a sense, the first conference formalised this interest and led to the formation of the Society. John left us with a series of questions, including will interest in forest history diminish and who owns environmental history?

Cameron Muir (ANU) was the second presenter, speaking on behalf of Libby Robin, about the *Environmental History Network* which Cameron is minding while Libby is overseas. The Network was formed in the mid-1990s by Richard Groves who passed it to Steve Dovers who in turn passed it to Libby in 1999. The Network is an important way of keeping people informed of the many things that are happening.

Steve Dovers (ANU) was next on the theme *Readings in Environmental History*. While not echoing John Dargavel, Steve also raised the question of who owns the past? He concluded with a number of observations, including that the ANU should lead the study of Environmental History in Australia.

The first session finished with a panel discussion on the *National PhD School*. Convened by **Daniel Connell (ANU)** and comprising **Jane Lennon (Australian Heritage Council)** and **Kylie Carman-Brown (ANU)**, the panel shared their views and insights on the value that the school provided towards their research. The Summer Schools promoted an intimate, sympathetic, collegiate and interactive experience, and helped form networks from which they continue to benefit.

The chairing of the second session, *New Directions*, was shared by **Jane Lennon** and **John Taylor**. **Lawrence Niewójt (ANU)** spoke about his studies the Otway Range in Victoria and, from the observation that human interventions in the landscape often outlive the people who create them, pointed out that we have the opportunity to help develop good policy.

Cameron Muir was the next speaker, this time presenting his own research on *Post-WWII Resource Conservation on the Western Plains of NSW*. Focussing on the Darling-Macquarie-Barwon catchment, he discussed the establishment of the soil and water conservation authorities and the attitudes of local people.

He was followed by **John Blay (South East Forests Project)** on *Reading Some Cultural Landscapes of the South East Forests of NSW*, in particular on the Bundian Way which is a traditional Aboriginal pathway that extends east-west from Eden on the coast to the Snowy Mountains and beyond. A one paragraph summary will not do it justice, but more information, including a map, is at www.netspeed.com.au/seforests/bundian_way.htm.

David Eastburn (ANU) was next with a presentation titled *Red Gum and Resilience - Reading a Political Landscape*. He discussed the management of the river red gum forests along the Murray River, going back to McKinney in 1881 who proposed that the area now covered by the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area be used for irrigation, to Monash's surveys in the early 20th century which recommended a holistic approach, including maintenance of the wetlands. Monash argued that anything which interfered with the natural irrigation will spell ruin.

An international perspective was provided by **Hartmut Holzknecht (ANU)** who spoke on *The Importance of Land Tenure for Forestry in Papua New Guinea*. Only 3 per cent of forested land in PNG is covered by Torrens Title, the rest is owned by customary title although there are some informal land transactions that aren't recognised by law. While there have been various attempts to "modernise" the tenure system, it will be more productive for forest managers to work with the system. Customary land ownership is here to stay.

Nic Gellie (ANU) spoke on *Historical Landscape Dryness and Fire Weather in the ACT Region*. Using a variety of sources, ranging from settlers' notebooks in the 1870s, official records and dendrochronology, Nic has been able to identify six classes of season from which he has been able to determine the pattern of fire weather around Canberra, and the conditions that might indicate the onset of a severe fire season.

On a "wetter" note, **Kylie Carman-Brown (ANU)** followed Nic's talk with *Seeing through Water: Hydrology and History of the Gippsland Lakes Catchment*. Kylie noted that the hydrological and groundwater cycles have had low historical interest when compared to more tangible water systems such as rivers. Her key interest on this topic is to look at the theme of connections. More specifically, the response in behaviour by Gippslanders to periods of

extreme dryness and wetness, and their response to slowest and fastest periods of change and water flow.

Marc Bellette (Melbourne Uni) spoke on *Reconstructing Forest-Fire Histories Using Grasses (Xanthorrhoea spp.)*. He provided insights into using "kinks" or "narrowings" on the trunks that result from fires, and has determined that since pre-European settlement, fires have decreased in frequency. Marc assured the audience that "no trees were harmed" in the process of removing the outside leaves to expose the "kinks" for measurement. This new methodological tool in fire frequency enables better estimates of fire data to be achieved.

Stephen Legge (Monash Uni) gave his presentation on *Victoria's Goldfields: The Gold Mining Industry pre-1918*. An interesting observation was that for 50 years the goldmining industry dominated the issue of forestry. Securing a cheap supply of timber to, for example, fuel the pumps to take water out of the mines is what helped to identify mining as the biggest destroyer of forests. This had implications for a developing plantation industry and the establishment of forest protection leagues that were dominated by mining interests as a political means to achieve economic ends and in the process, sidelining forestry conservation concerns.

The third session, *Opportunities and Needs*, was chaired by **John Dargavel** and considered what are the opportunities and what needs to be done with research, teaching, resources and outreach to realise them?

Maggie Shapley's (ANU) talk on *Spatial Identification of Pastoral History* had the audience on the edge of their seats. This reaction was in anticipation of the great potential for fuelling and fulfilling further research by accessing spatial information from the Noel Butlin Archives Centre. The Archives has a massive range of records with information such as station manager annual reports that, for example, can be interpreted to describe the state and condition of the landscape, including any forest on the property. One such example revealed information from Dagworth Station in the 1950s about the recovery of Mitchell grasses. Financial reports, agreements of sale, receipts, maps and plans, and farm diaries help to reveal information including names of workers, what improvements were made, the number of stock, how much "vermin proof" fencing was bought, and rainfall records, just to name a few.

Richard Baker and Peter Kanowski (both ANU) presented the issue of *Research Led Teaching* from an academic and administrative view, respectively. Richard noted that by giving students the tools to read the landscape, it is possible to embed environmental history into a course and that to kindle the fires of life-long learning it is critical to encourage research led teaching. Peter noted that structural factors, such as institutions favouring research more than teaching, are challenges to research led teaching. Further, individual factors also come into play such as academic freedom and that good researchers do not necessarily make good teachers.

Nicholas Brown (ANU) gave a talk based on his experience on *Research and Teaching*. Nicholas noted that funding for broad inter-disciplinary research has declined and that postgraduate research is being informed by different agendas. There is a need to look at how research can be fed into a world beyond research careers. Environmental history has to be multi-disciplinary and support for projects need to consider more than just the topic itself. There is a need to provide support in conceptualising topics and helping to set boundaries, support should not be premised on environmental history as a stand alone topic, and the need to expose students to the nature of ANU's research, as well as asking postgraduates what they want.

The final speaker was **Jane Lennon (Australian Heritage Council)** who talked about *History and Heritage*. The issue of forest heritage is often left to last and tends to be integrated with other disciplines. The AFHS has contributed to helping develop a large typology of various forestry related issues and topics. In an area where forestry issues are viewed through audit assessments (e.g. RFAs) and national parks (e.g. protected areas) only three forest areas have been listed on the National List of Heritage Places. Changing bureaucracies often lead to lost information (e.g. RFAs). The AFHS has a significant future role by: addressing the great silences in our papers (e.g. indigenous people); advocating active conservation; making submissions to park management plans; advocating archival collection of public forestry information; and advocating regular monitoring of forest heritage sites.

Abstracts

Steve Dovers (ANU Fenner School), *Readings in Environmental History*. It is difficult to identify an area in the domain of environment and sustainability that does not require time-depth (including history) to understand properly. Yet there is very little formal, interdisciplinary teaching of environmental history, and therefore few students (and then graduates, researchers, citizens) who have had the opportunity to explore different ways of drawing perspectives from the past to inform current debates. In this discussion I will reflect on *Readings in Environmental History*, an interdisciplinary, research-intensive third year course taught by Libby Robin and myself for eight years.

Lawrence Niewójt (ANU RSSS History Program), *Lessons from the Otway Range: Context for Planning and Policy Initiatives*. The work of environmental historians can inform public debates regarding the future of our communities and wider regions. The long-term study of land use, resource exploitation and changing settlement patterns in the Otway Range yields new knowledge and establishes a context for modern planning and policy initiatives.

Cameron Muir (ANU Fenner School), *Post-WWII Resource Conservation on the Western Plains of NSW*. My talk is based on a chapter I'm working on for the thesis. I'm looking at post-WWII resource conservation on the

western plains of NSW (mainly mid 1940s to early '60s). I ask whether there were differences in the approach towards soil and water that made Sam Clayton's soil conservation a success while water conservation schemes on the Macquarie River resulted in further degradation. I could "look to the future" by asking is there anything similar in those past cases to the approaches we are currently taking towards what we prioritise as major problems and how and who we think should solve them.

David Eastburn (ANU Fenner School), *Red Gum and Resilience - Reading a Political Landscape*. Lower Murrumbidgee red gum forests (35,000 ha) have a key place in the resilience of the local human community and the bioregion. They are also strategically placed to help protect, rejuvenate and restock (with native fish via snag habitat) the Murray.

Hartmut A. Holzknecht (ANU), *The Importance of Land Tenure for Forestry in Papua New Guinea*. The critical importance of clarity and understanding of PNG's customary land tenure systems underlies all present and future efforts of national and international efforts to assist in strengthening PNG's forest management and use systems to include more and more customary landowners and in developing appropriate responses to current global issues related to climate change and carbon sequestration. After a quick run through of past approaches to resource development and a description of the current situation (especially as it relates to forestry), the presentation ends with a discussion related to the future of these "past" systems and their continuing importance and evolution.

Kylie Carman-Brown (ANU), *Seeing Through Water: Hydrology and History in the Gippsland Lakes Catchment, 1838-1900*. My research explores both the perceptions of and the interaction with four key elements of the hydrological cycle from the beginning of European colonisation to the turn of the century. Using newspapers, private writings, and selected government records, I investigate how 19th century Gippslanders understood and behaved in relation to precipitation, flowing water, still water and evaporation.

Marc Bellette (Melbourne Uni), *Reconstructing Forest-Fire Histories Using Grasstrees (Xanthorrhoea spp.)*. A developing understanding of grasstree biology is assisting the interpretation of historical forest-fire regimes. The various methods of analysis that are in use will be described and their assumptions critically appraised. Grasstree analysis offers a promising new direction for research into forest-fire histories if several issues can be addressed.

Maggie Shapley (ANU Archives), *Spatial Identification of Pastoral History*. The Noel Butlin Archives Centre holds the original records of many Australian pastoral companies and stations which provide information about land use and the environment. Maggie Shapley, the University Archivist, will show examples of the records and discuss their spatial coverage.

THE 50TH ISSUE

As mentioned in the January issue of the newsletter, the 2007 Annual General Meeting approved of the idea of publishing a special issue of the newsletter to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Society. This will comprise a collection of personal reminiscences and reflections by inaugural members, on the creation and evolution of the Society. It was agreed subsequently to coincide the special newsletter edition with the 50th issue of the newsletter, to come out in August 2008.

Sue Feary is co-ordinating its production and has asked all inaugural members of the AFHS to prepare a short essay on their recollections of the early years of the society and also their reflections on how it has travelled and where it is going. These will be put together, along with old photos and other memorabilia to produce the 50th issue, a celebration of 20 years of the society. It's intended that this special issue be a glossy, although we haven't yet looked at the production side of things.

Sue can be contacted at
Sue.Feary@environment.nsw.gov.au.

And while we're talking about our own history, all of our newsletters are available on-line at www.foresthistory.org.au/main_activities.html (for more recent issues) and at www.foresthistory.org.au/archives.html for the ones going back to the first edition in 1988.

ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY NETWORK

There are a few references in this issue to the Environmental History Network, so it's probably appropriate to include a link to its website - <http://fennerschool-associated.anu.edu.au/environghist/>.

The website has information on *News & Events*, *What is Environmental History?*, *Environmental History Network*, *Environmental History in New Zealand* and *Links & Resources*. To join the Network, contact Cameron Muir at Cameron.Muir@anu.edu.au. As mentioned elsewhere, he is minding it while Libby Robin is overseas.

LOOKING FOR A RARE TREE OR FOREST BOOK?

If you are ever trying to find an out-of-print or unusual book about forest history, I suggest checking out Summerfield Books in UK. They have all sorts of second-hand and new books from all over the world. Just the place if you are looking for *Nivaki Pruning, Training and Shaping Trees the Japanese Way*, *The Law of Trees*, *Forests and Hedgerows*, or *Woody Plants of Western African Forests*, *Guide to the Forest Trees, Shrubs and Lianas from Senegal to Ghana*, or like me wanting a copy of Evelyn's *Sylva*. Its web site is: www.summerfieldbooks.com.

John Dargavel

QUEENSLAND RAIL TALES

Norman Houghton writes

At one time in my chequered career as an archivist I had a contract with Queensland Rail to appraise and cull 18,000 boxes of files from Brisbane to Townsville. In the course of this exercise I came across many interesting files that begged not to be tossed into the bin and craved sending to State Archives. I obliged. Out of this source I wrote a series of pieces called Queensland Rail Tales. Two of them concern timber.

Keep the Home Fires Burning

In days of old Queensland Rail (QR) staffs in various grades employed away from the larger towns and residing in departmental rental housing were entitled to free firewood where there was no gas or electricity. The fuel was to be used for cooking and water heating purposes. The firewood arrangements were embodied in employment Awards and specified in Staff Regulations from early in the 20th century.

The supply methods varied from district to district and many local arrangements and customs developed. In some instances QR supplied a truck load of wood, in others fettlers collected old sleepers. The costs to QR varied from 100% liability to zero, the latter applying in forested areas where fettlers made their own arrangements by cutting their own wood near the line (referred to as bush wood) and carting it on their trolleys. Some district managers allowed staff to collect wood in Departmental time, others refused this privilege and only allowed firewood collection after hours.

Over time the custom arose, and the Railways Commissioner so ruled, that the annual quota of wood was two rail truck loads. The Award did not specify a limit but few bothered to read the fine print and got by with two truck loads. That is, unless the wood was inferior. A fracas blew up in 1919 when the Station Master at Clermont went through his two truckloads in record time. He was told he could not have a re-supply unless he paid for it himself. He shot back that the wood was largely bark and sap and mostly cut from pine at Borilla. He said he did not burn it for the sake of burning it and further indicated his spirit of household economy by advising that the stove was lit between 6:30 and 7am and allowed to go out after the last meal in the evening.

He was lucky that he received any wood at all because the supplier in the district suddenly became short handed when his staff shot through, as a report put it, to go collecting marsupial skins. The Station Master at Minerva wailed that he had run out of wood two months prior and objected to the assessment of the Storekeeper at Rockhampton that a truck of wood should last five months and none would be delivered until the calendar had run a few more weeks.

The fettlers could manage for themselves regarding firewood supply, being used to hard physical labour and having access to trolleys, but Station Masters and Female

Gate and Caretakers were treated differently. They had wood delivered to them but the simplest of rules could sometimes become very complicated to administer.

Females had the wood delivered into the house yard from the rail truck by a fettling gang. Station Masters were also entitled to this arrangement. In 1948 a supplementary instruction was issued to the effect that where a male member of the family resides at home then the wood was to be unloaded at the side of the line and the family cart the wood inside the fence line. It was spelt out that where the Female Gate or Caretaker had a husband then it was his job to cart the wood.

In situations where the wood could not be unloaded within a reasonable distance of the fence, the wood was carted by road vehicle and the cost charged to QR. Simple enough, but the bureaucratic mind had to exercise itself with a definition of what constitutes a reasonable distance between wagon and fence. The distance of 100 ft was settled on in some areas and 600 ft for others.

Needless to relate, the tape measure came out and the arguments began at those stations where the Station Master's fence was 99 or 101 ft distant. Worse still if the fence was less than 100 ft distant but the lie of the land did not allow the fettlers to throw the wood from the rail truck to near the fence or over the fence. It was all getting very messy and by February 1949 the Commissioner fixed a uniform distance of 50 yards or 150 ft. He further ruled QR was not liable for road cartage if a Station Master engaged a carrier because the Award does not provide for such cartage.

The matter went quiet for a while and inflamed again in 1951 over the wood pile for the Longreach Station Master. It was claimed that the distance was more than 50 yards and it would be unreasonable to expect the Station Master to trolley over this distance, given QR's refusal to pay cartage. Central West Queensland measuring tapes must have been subject to heat flex at that time because the 50 yards became in subsequent correspondence first 53 yards, then 153 yards and finally 340 yards (but not in a straight line as it was soberly put). The argument rattled on, even reaching the agenda papers for a meeting of the Australian Railways Union in faraway Brisbane.

Not to be outdone, QR queried whether or not the wood could have been unloaded at 30 yards distance rather than 340 and was this point the usual site for unloading wood from Departmental wagons? The query could not be answered because the previous Station Master did not use Departmental wood. In the end it all became too much a riot of figures and confusion and QR agreed to pay for the cartage in this instance.

The distance issue continued to fester until the matter was referred to the Industrial Court for a ruling. In July 1953 a judgment was handed down saying that the Commissioner had no right to fix a distance limit and Station Masters were entitled to wood being made accessible without cost but Station Masters must exercise commonsense. QR drew the line at what was

"accessible" and gangs were instructed to throw the wood over the fence but not cart it under the house.

By this time many Departmental houses were connected to gas or electricity and the wood issue should have gone away but it did not. The wash-house out the back invariably had a copper installed and much calculation had to be gone into to determine that one ton per year would be sufficient. In the end all parties were thankful for progress that eventually ended the days of wood fuel and stopped the fiery arguments.

The Caretaker

Queensland Rail (QR) operated a number of sawmills to cut sleepers and bridge timbers for use in the construction and maintenance of lines all over Queensland. The mills were placed in forested areas where the timbers were judged suitable for railway works and one such mill was established in 1912 at Barakula on the slopes of the Great Divide, nearly 42 kms north of Chinchilla on the Toowoomba to Charleville line. It was accessed by means of a 3 ft 6 in gauge tramway wholly owned and operated by QR.

The sawmill plant comprised a 20 hp portable steam engine, Canadian bench, twin saw benches plus one adzer and one adzing machine. A second engine powered a water pump at a nearby creek. The daily output was around 500 sleepers. In August 1928 the plant was mothballed owing to QR doing less line building and maintenance and having no immediate need for sleepers. The mill then had a stockpile of 63,000 sleepers.

The plant and environs was left in the charge of caretaker F. Brooks and he found himself equivalent mayor, town clerk and engineer of a small settlement deep in the bush. When it was operating the mill had a collection of buildings for the plant plus huts and tents for the staff. These huts were subsequently rented to itinerant sleeper cutters and passers by. Brooks was responsible for the tenancies, collecting the rent and keeping the water pumping plant in operation. He also had to maintain the machinery in a near working order, pump out the belt drive and sawdust pits after rain, attend to the occasional sleeper train that called, be sales agent for the small timbers and cut slabs lying at the mill, patrol the tramway to Chinchilla to keep the telephone line in order, cut the suckers that encroached the tram and help the Chinchilla track gang on the rare occasions when they ventured along the line.

Brooks had office accommodation and it seems to have been up to standard in its appointments and this included a Smiths Premier Typewriter. He was a good typist but his spelling was a little awry at times but, no matter, he got his message across. In this office Brooks knocked up the occasional memorandum and letter, made a phone call or two (which he dutifully paid sixpence for each time and carefully remitted the money to the Receiver of Revenue), wrote out the wagon tickets for the infrequent sleeper train that arrived and scribbled a few pencil notes.

Brooks was a loyal employee and keen for the mill to re-open and was not short of ideas on this score. He was stuck in the middle of nowhere and had to show initiative from time to time. This was not always appreciated by QR management in comfortable offices at Brisbane.

He struck a rent rate for the huts that seemed reasonable and was later reprimanded for allowing a slight discount when the running water to the huts had to be disconnected owing to pipe corrosion. Occasionally an Inspector would call and make some pedantic criticism of Brook's management, especially about the condition of the mill plant. Brooks endeavoured to keep the mill in order but the elements and lack of use took their toll. Pits crumbled, water seeped through, the sawdust heap got soggy and crept, the ridge spout broke in half. He requisitioned for a labourer to help with some repairs but the request was denied as QR did not want to spend any labour funds on the mill other than Brook's wages. There was 8,000 tons of billet wood stacked near the mill and Brooks suggested that he be given an engine driver and two men so that they could cut the billets into stove wood for sale at a profit. The request went no further than the in-tray of a Brisbane office. On another occasion he submitted, what today would be called a business case, a memorandum outlining the economic and environmental benefits of producing sawn rather than hand cut and adzed sleepers (less waste, cheaper unit costs etc). This was prompted through QR and the Forestry Department moving to hand cut sleepers for district orders, but the memorandum went nowhere. The message was clear, Brooks could do whatever he liked, so long as he did not ask for help or bring it to official attention.

Not even a "worldwind", as Brooks described it, that hit in January 1932 and tore off 50 sheets of roofing iron and wrecked the rafters could bestir official action. Brooks requisitioned for repair materials but received nothing.

He was a husbandler of resources and no waste crossed his threshold. He went through typewriter ribbons at the rate one every three years and was modest in his consumption of typing paper, envelopes and pencils. A similar economy prevailed in his mechanical department where he had a motorized quadricycle and he nursed one drum of benzine and one drum of kerosene through six weeks until they ran dry. The cycle was used to patrol and maintain the telephone line, convey the mails, collect groceries and act as all weather transport, especially in the storm seasons when the vehicle tracks were washed out (the road being "imparceable" according to Brooks) and no motor vehicles possessed by anyone at the mill at that time. Nevertheless in the depths of the Depression the Chief Engineer in Brisbane wanted to know why funds were being wasted on benzine and kerosene for a cycle on a line that was closed, no timber being produced by the mill and therefore no need for a cycle. Brooks responded gracefully pointing out the situation and the fuel continued to be issued.

Brooks was fighting a losing battle not only with the mill plant and shed but also with the tramway and he could not possibly manage to keep the track in order alone and with no resources. An inspection in 1933 revealed that 15% of the sleepers were rotten, 15% of the dog spikes were loose and nearly 10,000 sleepers would be needed to bring the track up to standard. No action was taken and the rare sleeper train that ran over the rickety track did so a snail's pace.

By 1934 all the tenants at the huts had motor vehicles, the Forestry Department moved gangs into the area to hand cut sleepers and business and social activities at Barakula sawmill were on the up. Brooks indented for a box of blue chalk, the first in years, so timber marking was in the offing to clear some stock. He also ordered a bottle of ink, a rare purchase whose elongated time frame was probably due to the ink's only use as affixing his signature to his serial memoranda and letters asking for benzene, kerosene, pencils, paper, envelopes and wagon tickets.

The sleeper cutters were more trouble than they were worth as campers and hut occupiers at the mill because they had constant disputes among themselves about tallies and payments and the Union had to be called in to settle matters. Brooks' typewriter was requisitioned to pound out letters of protest from the aggrieved parties, including one to the local Parliamentary member.

How did it all end? Who knows? The file terminates in May 1936 with Brooks still on the job after eight years tending the sagging and rusting sawmill. What devotion.

LOGGING ON TO LEGENDS

The northern Victorian town of Tongala, 25 km south east of Echuca, has found a new way to honour its local legends. Portraits of the dairy town's heroes and their stories, unearthed by Tongala's primary school students, have been immortalised in paint on red gum logs.

Teacher Robyn Fulton says that the students began to dig into their community's past, learning more about the town and about their own family histories.

The students set about researching community heroes, starting with early Tongala settlers, Alfred Deakin (Australia's second Prime Minister) and 19th century author Edward Curr.

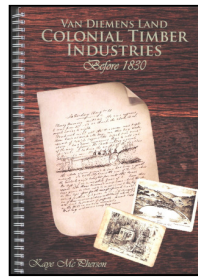
Local artist Murray Ross transformed the barky exterior of red gum logs into detailed masterpieces which would properly display the students' work.

The students reported that they learnt much about Tongala's history. One said it was a great way to research and that "we learnt about the people who made our town what it is today".

Adapted from an article by Sarah Warne, "Logging on to legends", published in The Weekly Times of 21st May 2008.



NEW PUBLICATIONS



Kaye McPherson 2007. *Van Diemens Land Colonial Timber Industries before 1830*. Lindisfarne, Tasmania: Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers. ISBN 187620807. 169 pages, A4, spiral bound. (Available from the publishers for \$40 + \$9 postage and packing, PO Box 1437, LINDISFARNE TAS 7015, or from the website at www.tasmanianaboriginal.com.au.)

Kaye McPherson gave us a taste of her historical geography of early settlement forests and industries in Van Diemens Land in her paper to our 2002 conference in Tasmania. The paper was based on her Masters thesis that then was still "in progress". Now she has completed the thesis that canvassed the sixty-seven processing industries that existed in the first three decades of settlement. This book takes up the story of the sixteen forest-related industries, and it is their sheer variety that draws our attention: soap, potash, bricks, varieties of lime, wheelwrights, coopers are some that we rarely remember as important forest industries.

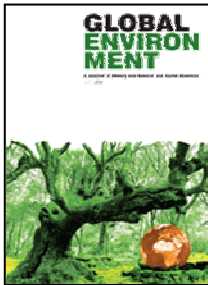
The book covers the remarkable period from 1803 to 1830 during which the main outline of European settlement was established from the Tamar to the Derwent, down the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and on the west coast in Macquarie Harbour. Such a short period in a distinctive place offers an unrivalled opportunity to study the formation of a society from its beginnings. McPherson observes that "there was no aspect of Van Diemens Land that was not viewed, exploited or destroyed within the narrow vision of Imperial Britain". Yet the vision that had carried the convicts, jailers, soldiers and a few settlers produced the very diversity from which a more independent spirit started to emerge. For example, John Petchey, the Hobart Town Gaoler, as McPherson notes, sold the firewood to the gaol he ran, and elsewhere I have noted how some of the officers used their assigned convicts and dogs to catch kangaroos whose meat they then sold to the Commissariat. Clearly, enterprising or corrupt, nascent local capitalists found ways to prosper from others' work.

Although the European population grew from forty-three to forty thousand, the Aboriginal population fell drastically and the landscapes that they had managed, seemingly forever, were destroyed by the new landscapes of farming and grazing. The land that they called Trowernna was being rapidly reshaped and renamed. McPherson's great concern for the Aboriginal lands and people is expressed primarily in the first chapter dealing with the Aboriginal landscape at the beginning of her period and a poetic piece, "Tree dreaming: the Liah Pootah view of Trowernna", after the last chapter. The central portion of the book is divided into short chapters grouped in sections on logging camps, timber exports, uses and the secondary products.

In writing *Van Diemens Land Colonial Timber Industries before 1830*, Kaye McPherson has been able to draw on

ten journals and studies published between 1990 and 2002, her own thesis, a thorough search of the newspapers and gazettes of the period, as well as the older and better known material. The result is an easily read book that provides a unique view of the industrial diversity of Tasmanian forest use in a critical formative period.

John Dargavel



Global Environment: a Journal of History and Natural and Social Sciences, n.1-2008. Rome, Italy: XL Edizioni for the Global Environment Society. ISSN 1973-3739. (Foreign subscriptions €50 per year, two issues per year - see www.xledizioni.com.)

The first issue of this new journal has now arrived, and very good it looks too. It has the bold aim "... to understand the processes that have led to the present state of our environment, as well as differences between its state and management today and in past epochs". It intends "to stimulate and gather studies ... which ... share a conception of the environment as a perspective from which to look at the problems of the world and its history". It will "include not only historians, but also ecologists, agronomists, experts in forest sciences, botanists, geologists, climatologists, economists, sociologists, urbanists, jurists, archaeologists, etc".

Global Environment is based in Italy under the editorship of Mauro Agnoletti who is well known to many forest historians and Gabriella Corona. All the contributions are in English. More details can be found at: www.globalenvironment.it.

The first issue has seven "research articles", a book review, a piece on waste and recycling in Japanese cities, and an interview on environmental well-being and social justice with the German researcher, Wolfgang Sachs. The issue spans a wide range geographically and intellectually, and all the contributions are of a very high standard. I found the article by Emmanuel Kreike particularly insightful in its analysis of the paradigms of environmental change, and the interview with Sachs a powerful and disturbing statement of the intertwined problems of environment and social justice at present.

From what we can judge so far, *Global Environment* takes a bolder, more political stance than the two existing environmental history journals, *Environment and History* and *Environmental History*, and thus complements them. Given the severity of the world's environmental problems, it is a valuable contribution and we wish it every success.

John Dargavel



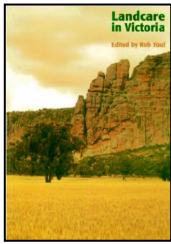
Norman Houghton 2007. *Beech Forest, Capital on the Ridge*. Geelong, Victoria: Norman Houghton (self-published). No ISBN. 112 pages, A4. (Available from the author for \$32 including postage, PO Box 1128, GEELONG VIC 3220.)

Houghton's latest monograph chronicles the establishment, expansion and decline of Beech Forest, a small town located on the main ridge of the Otway Range in Victoria. Sawmillers, foresters and transport engineers figure large in this book as the process of making the remote region accessible, and thereby making resource industries viable, was a crucial component of the community's past. The first track for wheeled access was cut through the bush five years after land selectors started taking up properties in the thick forests of the Otway Range in 1884. Subsequent road improvements were so slow and piecemeal that well into the 20th century residents often opted for sleds to transport goods over muddy tracks, and the completion of a narrow-gauge railway link in 1902 further discouraged Shire authorities on this front. The railway made timber harvesting viable, and Houghton spends considerable time detailing the region's major sawmilling operations, the people involved in this business, and the timber tramways constructed to link bush operations with the region's railway.

Agricultural settlement brought with it the scourge of fire, and the bushfires experienced in the Otway region played a major role in land abandonment and loss of population. In the aftermath of the 1939 bushfire, the paper mill at Maryvale in Gippsland hired contractors to remove fire-damaged spars from the Otway forest. This generated an unprecedented level of resource extraction and railway traffic in the Beech Forest area. While this boom was short-lived, the policy of transforming abandoned farms to tree plantations was a long-lasting success for the Forests Commission of Victoria and continues to be an important component of the regional landscape.

Avid readers of local history will recognise some thematic overlap between this monograph and Houghton's previous works *The Beechy: the Life and Times of the Colac-Beech Forest-Crowes Narrow-Gauge Railway, 1902-1962* (1992) and *Beech Forest, A Century on the Ridge* (1984). True to the genre, there is a lack of referencing to key source materials, the major exception being the numerous high-quality photos that have been reproduced and included in this book. These large, evocative photographs are a real treat for readers. For people unfamiliar with Beech Forest and its vicinity, this text provides a good introduction to the locality, highlights the community's persistent difficulties in dealing with economic adjustments, and explains the actions taken to establish eco-tourism during recent years.

Lawrence Nienwójt



Rob Youl (Editor) 2006. *Landcare in Victoria*. South Melbourne: Rob Youl Consulting Pty Ltd. ISBN 0977524000. 195 pages. (Available from the publishers for \$24 including postage and GST, 113 Nelson Road, SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC 3205. All profits will go towards future publications.)

This is a fascinating, eye-opening account of the history of Landcare in Victoria judiciously overseen by Rob Youl. This story should be told because history is an insightful teacher and "landcarers" need to appreciate what Landcare is and what it represents. Importantly, this is a living history - most of the book's contributors and many other persons listed still work or live in a Landcare environment.

I suspect many people think the Potter Farmland Plan was the genesis of Landcare given its high profile in the mid-late 1980s, but this was only one of probably hundreds of events during the decade that in their own way contributed to the inception of Landcare, which few people would really know about.

Landcare in Victoria is an enthralling account of the events, machinations and circumstances that led to the creation of Landcare. The events, which were coincidental, fortuitous and in some instances orchestrated, are well researched and documented and presented in a perspective to give a much deeper understanding of how Landcare came to be.

Thirty six authors including landholders, community representatives, scientists, government officers, representatives of both agriculture and forestry bodies, professional associations, extension officers, ministerial staff, politicians and others, who were instrumental or played a role in the creation of Landcare, present a first hand view of the nature and extent of their participation in the creation of Landcare.

All contributions are excellent and worth reading in their own right, but three stand out: chapters by Horrie Poussard, John Jack and Rob Youl. Another chapter by Pat Francis, one of Australia's leading rural journalists, questions sustainable farming in Landcare today.

In the early 1980s the circumstances were ripe for Landcare to emerge, not that people knew it at the time, but many were working in that direction. There was much independent activity on farms, in regional areas, a new focus on group extension, government funding for salinity, soil conservation and tree growing and increasing public interest in the environment.

The trigger for the launch of Landcare was Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, and later Victorian Premier from 1990-92, along with development of a Landcare policy and support from the Victorian Farmers Federation. Horrie Poussard was fundamental in establishing the concept, as embraced by senior managers within government and key non-government representative organizations; he was, with a handful of others, the policy innovator of the day.

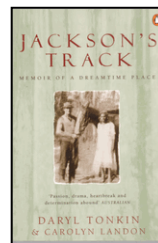
The book is revealing on the earlier leadership, vision, effort and support of the Soil Conservation Authority and Forests Commission, which helped develop the concept, in concert with a host of other players. This continued through the mid 1980s despite the Victorian Government's voracious reorganizing of five large departments - soil conservation, wildlife, forests, lands and parks - into a mega department. I was surprised to learn of the role of Australian Forest Growers, formerly Australian Forest Development Institute, and I would love to have seen included a chapter by Joan Kirner - where would Landcare be without her support as minister and premier?

Personally I found the book enormously enjoyable, as I know many of the authors and others mentioned. Even so I am sure people seeking Landcare's roots, who have little knowledge of Landcare history, will be captivated by the people in the book, their vision, how they inspired others and the things achieved beyond their dreams.

Finally, the book is a credit to Rob Youl and his tireless devotion to landcare since its inception. Rob has intimately participated in and acutely observed Landcare develop over the last twenty years in Victoria. Rob is an outstanding catalyst - he has made things happen from the formative days of Landcare to the present and I am sure for many years yet.

His amazing knowledge and recollection of events is enthralling and formidable and this book and its authors recount the Landcare story. As expected, this is more than a record of events - it is an interweaving of people, circumstances and events that constitute a story that will be seen to be part of Australia's landscape history. Anyone who is interested in land management, individually or through Landcare groups, in catchments or natural resource management regions, will enjoy *Landcare in Victoria* and be wiser and richer for the experience.

Arthur Lyons
President, Australian Forest Growers Tasmania Branch



Daryl Tonkin & Carolyn Landon 2000. *Jackson's Track - Memoir of a Dreamtime Place*. Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Australia. ISBN 0140276602.

Not a new publication, but one which I read recently. Ostensibly about a white man - Daryl Tonkin - who meets an Aboriginal woman and who lives with her in a forest in Gippsland. The book discusses their lives, the prejudice they encounter (including, sadly, from Daryl's own family) and life from the 1930s to the 1990s. Daryl worked in the timber industry and at one stage owned a sawmill and he provides some interesting insights that make this a worthwhile read for forest historians. Well recommended.

Fintán Ó Laighin

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES



Climate Change and the "Crisis of Reason" - A Symposium to Honour the Life and Work of Val Plumwood

20th June 2008, 9AM-5PM, Fenner School Seminar Room, Hancock Building, ANU, Canberra

Dr Val Plumwood worked at the leading edge of eco-philosophy nationally and globally. Like many people, she could see that the way of life developed in the western world was not only unsustainable but was so destructive that it would take an unimaginably terrible toll on the natural world.

Her analysis started with the anthropocentrism of western ethics and practice, and its devastating effects. Her feminist analysis connected the logic of the oppression of women and minorities with the logic of the oppression of the natural world. Her commitment at all times was to an environmental ethic that would include humans within the natural world and that would lead toward a new culture of connectivity and responsibility.

In living her vision she was an activist and an ardent lover of the natural world. Now that the evidence for global climate change is taking the foreground in public discussions, we need ever more urgently to connect human cultures, practices and life values with other living beings, ecosystems, and global systems.

In this symposium dedicated to Val Plumwood, presentations and discussions will focus on all aspects of Val's work: critical and analytic, activist, ethical and cultural visionary. Climate change will be viewed and reconsidered from within the theoretical frame of reference that she provided.

Speakers will include:

- * Will Steffen (Climate Science, Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU);
- * Freya Mathews (Philosophy, Latrobe);
- * Kate Rigby (Comparative Literature, Monash);
- * John Dryzek (Political Science, ANU);
- * Judith Ajani (Ecological Economics, Fenner School, ANU); and

Thom van Dooren (Science and Technology Studies, University of Hull).

RSVP by **Tuesday 17th June** to:
diane.jakobasch@anu.edu.au.

More information at
http://billboard.anu.edu.au/event_view.asp?id=27519.

Thanks to Cameron Muir (Environmental History Network) for this contribution.

Oral History Association of Australia

The Oral History Association of Australia is holding its National Conference in Launceston from 17th-20th October 2009 and is inviting proposals for presentations on the theme of *Islands of Memory: Navigating Personal and Public History*. Sub-themes include:

- * navigating truth and memory;
- * navigating through generations; and
- * navigating new technologies.

The Association encourages proposals from people who have worked with oral history in a wide range of environments such as family history and community projects, museums, heritage agencies, academic institutions, radio and television, law courts and performing arts.

Proposals (maximum 200 words) are invited for individual papers, thematic panels, workshops and performances. The closing date for proposals is **31st October 2008**. They should be sent to:

Jill Cassidy
President OHAA (Tas) Inc
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery
PO Box 403
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250
Jill.Cassidy@qvmag.tas.gov.au

More information at www.ohaa.net.au.

Thanks to Denise Gaughwin for this contribution.

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. Payment can be made by cheque or money order, or through Electronic Funds Transfer. Cheques or Money Orders made payable to the AFHS:

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.)

Name:	
Address	
E-mail	

Please mark the box if you would like a receipt - otherwise an acknowledgment will be sent by e-mail.