
AUSTRALIAN

Forest History

SOCIETY Inc.

Newsletter No. 50
September 2008

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



Forest historians in their natural habitat, Tasmanian conference 2002

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ISSN 1033-937 X



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE SOCIETY—A TIME FOR REFLECTION

The Australian Forest History Society was founded twenty years ago, far enough in the past that the circumstances of its origin are not well known by much of its present membership, but recent enough that most of its founders are still active members with fully functional memories. It is therefore fitting that in this 20th anniversary year an effort has been made to compile a record of the Society's beginnings, written by those who were there, for the benefit of those who were not.

My own connection with the Society began on 7 February 1993. I can be precise about this, for it was an occasion that I remember well. I was newly embarked on my doctoral adventure, an historical study of forest conservation. Attending a conference on *Sustainable Forestry in Australia* being held at the University of New England seemed to be an ideal way to become immersed in some of the forest politics of the time. It was over a conference breakfast that I first met John Dargavel. We subsequently shared a seat during the field trip to Chaelundi State Forest, then a focal point of conflict over forest use. This chance meeting was my introduction to the Australian Forest History Society, which I eagerly joined soon after.

The Society's next national conference, its third and my first, was held at Jervis Bay in November 1996. You couldn't have kept me away. It has been my good fortune to have attended all subsequent national conferences (Gympie in April 1999; Hobart in February 2002; Augusta in September 2004; Christchurch in January–February 2007) and the AFHS symposium *History of the Araucarian Forests* (Brisbane in August 2005), but I regret not the *Perfumed Pineries* (Callitris forests) conference at Coonabarabran in November 2000. Through these conferences, and associated field trips, I have been drawn into the Society's friendly social and scholarly network.

The impending 20th anniversary milestone inevitably caused some reflection about the Society's own history, and this led in 2007 to the decision to have early paper-only editions of our

Newsletter digitised, then to have all editions made publicly accessible via our website. A related project was to compile reminiscences of as many as possible of the Society's founding members, for publication during 2008. The present round-numbered edition of the Newsletter was chosen as the vehicle.

The following pages contain articles by six individuals—John Dargavel, Kevin Frawley, Stephen Legg, Jenny Mills, Jane Lennon, and Sue Feary—all of whom were closely involved with the inauguration of the Australian Forest History Society in 1988. Their accounts will be of great interest, I am sure, to members like myself who, not having been there at the beginning, have often wondered exactly how our Society began.

Brett Stubbs, President AFHS



ORIGINS OF THE SOCIETY

The Society's story starts at the Australian National University in 1980. One of the senior lecturers, Les Carron, was writing his 'History of forestry in Australia', while John Banks, Kevin Frawley and I were mature age PhD students. Kevin was writing on 'Forest and land management in north-east Queensland: 1859-1960'; John Banks was researching 'The use of dendrochronology in the interpretation of the dynamics of the snow gum forest'; and I was writing 'The development of the Tasmanian wood industries: a radical analysis'. Although our topics were very different, we were interested in each other's work and wondered who else might be working in forest history. Between 1980 and 1982, we circulated five issues of an 'Ad hoc communication of research in the history of forestry and the forest products industry' through libraries and organisations. It listed our names and addresses, current research and publications, and added items of interest and the contact details of other people as we heard of them.

It became clear that the people actively researching forest history were scattered across the country in different institutions, disciplines



and walks of life, and had little or no knowledge of each other's interests. Note that this was well before the Internet and email. In 1981 we had built up a contact network of twenty-two people which enabled us to convene a two-day meeting in the Forestry Department to discuss research-in-progress. In addition to the four of us at ANU, Graydon Henning came from the University of New England, Norm Houghton from the Geelong Historical Records Centre, Ken Jackson from the University of Auckland, Jenny Mills from Western Australia, and Calvin Noack from the NSW Forestry Commission.

John Banks, Kevin and I finished our PhDs in 1982-83. John stayed on in the Forestry Department, Kevin went to ADFA and I moved to the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies (CRES—now part of the Fenner School of Environment and Society) at ANU in 1985. In 1987 we started to plan for a small conference on Australian forest history. We imagined that we might be able to attract 15–20 people to attend. It was possible to hold the meeting in CRES because it was widely respected and aloof from the conflicts that were racking the forest sector and dividing the University at the time.

Our first national conference opened in CRES on Wednesday 9 May 1988 and ran for three days. To our delighted surprise, not only were 28 papers offered, but about 60 people registered. We were particularly honoured that H. K. 'Pete' Steen, President of the Forest History Society came from the USA and gave a paper on the methods and means of doing forest history in North America. We knew their excellent *Journal of Forest History* and I had met Pete at the symposium on the history of sustained yield forestry that he had organised with IUFRO in Portland in 1983.

I also met Richard Tucker at the Forest History Society/IUFRO conference in Portland. He was convening IUFRO's Tropical Forest History Group and planning to hold three meetings covering South America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific. To get the project going, I agreed to arrange the one for the Asia-Pacific region in Australia, arguing that one-third of Australia lies in the tropics. It was held on 16–18 May so that people could come to either or both conferences and to the field tour that was run between them.

Fortunately the Australian Government provided funds for us to bring Subash Chandran and A. J. Rawat from India and Richard Grove from Cambridge. Like our Australian meeting, it was a 'first'. Having the two conferences back-to-back not only helped build attendance, but also raised the profile of Australian forest history internationally.

At the end of our conference, it was unanimously resolved to form the Australian Forest History Society with the object 'to advance historical understanding of human interactions with Australian forest and woodland environments'. It did not have a formal structure so that it could not take advocacy positions in the forest conflicts. For the first few years, convenors put out occasional newsletters and organised subsequent conferences. Insurance and banking requirements eventually meant that the Society had to be incorporated, which it was in 1998, but its constitution prevents it taking advocacy positions, except about the conservation of historical records.

Encouragement and support from CRES have been central to establishing forest history in Australia and gaining its international recognition. CRES staff undertook the administration of these two meetings, and the Department of Forestry turned one of its laboratories into an art gallery for an exhibition of remarkable Chinese brush paintings of Australian flora. CRES published the proceedings of the Asia-Pacific conference and the proceedings of five of the Australian conferences, funded partly by the AFHS and partly by sales. The proceedings of the first national conference were funded entirely by ADFA. The critical element was CRES's willingness to stock, sell and despatch the volumes, as orders came in slowly over several years. Seven national conferences have been held, rotated through the different States and in New Zealand, and a special conference on the Callitris forests. Also, a symposium on the Araucarian forests was held in collaboration with IUFRO. About 50-70 people have attended each conference.

John Dargavel, Founder of AFHS and President from 1988 to 2004



20 YEARS OF THE AUSTRALIAN FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY: SOME ANCIENT HISTORY

The Australian Forest History Society was formed in 1988 and ten years later (May 1998) became an incorporated body in the ACT. Interest in forming a forest history network and interactions between scattered researchers predated the formation of the Society in 1988 by almost another ten years.

In the early 1980s I was writing a PhD in the Geography Department (Faculties ANU) about the development of public policy for forest and land management in Queensland with particular reference to the northern rainforests. Long on story, short on theory, this kept me occupied until almost the mid-eighties. I had come to it, in part, from 'historical geography,' but it came to my attention that other people were doing similar things, which they called 'forest history'. John Dargavel and Les Carron had started the ball rolling with their 'ad-hoc communication' on 'Research in the history of forestry and the forest products industry'. A small group of people with diverse interests, capable of being united under that heading, sent in details of their research. Some became stalwarts of the later Society; others apparently didn't continue on the journey. Out of this interest came a forest history meeting on 31 August–1 September 1981, held at the Department of Forestry, ANU. This meeting provided an important foundation for the later Society, as most of those attending continued to be active in forest history research and Society activities. They included: John Banks, Les Carron, John Dargavel, Kevin Frawley, Graydon Henning, Norm Houghton, Ken Jackson, Jenny Mills and Calvin Noack.

In 1984 John Banks, John Dargavel and Kevin Frawley offered an ANU Centre for Continuing Education course entitled 'Histories of People and Australian Forests'. A small but enthusiastic group attended the course, including Noel Semple who would later jointly edit the first forest history conference proceedings published in 1989. At the time, John Banks was doing his dendrochronological work on the snow gums of the sub-alpine zone. The field trip, with John's intimate knowledge of the mountain

forest/woodland and fire, was a memorable part of this course. His unravelling of the fire history linked to the ecology of the mountain vegetation, climatic conditions, and Aboriginal and European use of fire, for the first time put together a sound scientific basis for understanding fire in the mountains. Recently, in doing consultancy work on the management plan for Namadgi National Park, I have ensured that John's work on the 'historical ecology' of the mountains has been recognised in the fire chapter.

Over the next couple of years, the idea of forming a Society gained strength, and in 1987 a meeting was held at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies to consider firming up a proposal. It was decided to hold a conference the following year, present a proposal for the formation of a Society, and suggest the form that such a society should take, at least in its formative years. A field trip was also to be included. A planning panel for the conference was formed comprising John Dargavel, Kevin Frawley and Charles Fahey. The first conference in 1988 set out to embrace the major themes considered important and which had become evident through the earlier informal meetings. The scope was wide: ecological history; Aboriginal society; public forestry; industries and labour; regional approaches; conservation; and historical sources. Invited review papers commenced each of the themes. From the previous easygoing informality there was now a fair bit to do to get the conference underway, but there was plenty of enthusiasm. I was fairly sure I could get the proceedings word-processed, illustrated and printed through the resources of the Australian Defence Force Academy and its printery, likewise the production of a newsletter. This would be good use of the taxpayers' military dollar, I reasoned. There was the proposal to prepare and a field excursion to organise.

The post-conference field excursion was run between the Australian Forest History Conference (9–11 May) and the IUFRO Tropical Forest History Working Group Meeting (16–18 May), and some delegates to the latter came on the trip. Trip numbers were limited to the capacity of a small Coaster bus. The field excursion gave the opportunity to visit some of



the forest country west of the ACT and to stay in country pubs. After crossing the Brindabella Range and a stop for the snow gums, we descended to Tumut and Batlow, and visited the site of the former Hardys Mill in alpine ash forest north of Tumberumba. This mill had been water-powered and the remains of its large Pelton wheel were still there. That night at dinner at the pub, local historian George Martin talked about the area's history and sold a few copies of his book *Survivors and Dreamers*, which had a section on the timber industry. The next day we crossed the Murray River at Jingellic and had a magnificent lunch at the small pub at Koetong. Nearby is a superb example of a timber trestle bridge. From there we travelled to Myrtleford, staying overnight and visiting the large AFI softwood sawmill. A contrast was the dilapidated hardwood mill at Rutherglen, near the river red gum forests of the Murray River. Rutherglen provided the opportunity for a winery lunch, and we stayed that night in the large Soden's Australia Hotel (est. 1854), Albury, a landmark in the town (and still going strong). The return trip was along the Hume Highway, which gave overseas visitors the opportunity to see the pastoral landscape and tree dieback. However, some of those more familiar with that landscape could use the opportunity for a snooze after some late nights in those country pubs.

The AFHS was established, and had its first conference and field trip. All that remained was to edit the proceedings for publication and commence the newsletter! A new era had begun.

Kevin Frawley



DEAR FRIENDS...

'Dear Friends...' John Dargavel's welcoming phrase has signalled the beginning of every conference organised by the Australian Forest History Society. To me it also marks the supportive nature of our Society and the generosity of the man. John had kindly agreed to meet me at the ANU to discuss his work on Tasmanian and Victorian forestry while I was

researching my PhD in the late 1980s. As one of the chief organisers, he subsequently invited me to attend the May 1988 first National Conference of what was inaugurated as the Australian Forest History Society, a meeting of kindred spirits from surprisingly diverse backgrounds and ideologies united by a common love of forests and a passion for historical research.

Our decision to maintain independence on the then raging forest debate, and to form a society that valued and encouraged diversity of opinion, method and interest has done much to ensure the resilience of the Society and to attract newcomers who have helped to form a valuable international scholarly network. But it is people, not constitutions that make a society, and we have had a particularly capable group of leaders, administrators, and editors as well as loyal members. The decision to establish a regular round (rotation?!) of conferences in different forest regions throughout Australasia over the past twenty years has also added enormously to the society's success by adding to members' knowledge, as well as stimulating local and regional research and providing a national and international context for it. Similarly, the thematic turns, such as 'research sources and methods' and 'forest age' have generated valuable perspectives, and the regular newsletter and special research papers have provided a useful social and research forum. The respect shown for theory and practice, labour and capital, indigeneity and modernity, aesthetic and other sensibilities, as well as research at a range of scales, and different forest types, were all important. Avowedly 'national', the Society has never been parochial, with a strong and consistent representation from New Zealand (culminating in our 2007 Christchurch conference), and with visits from a range of European and North American forest historians.

I have had the privilege of attending all but one of our national conferences, and the post-conference tours have all been highlights. In this short memoir I want to selectively convey something of the research networks and friendships forged through the Society and in so doing to register my thanks for its collegiality. My recollections include the chilly May Canberra conference that coincided with the



opening of the new national Parliament House. That conference focused on sources and methods, was full of possibilities, and saw the establishment of the Society. Papers by American environmental historian Donald Worster, the input from forestry doyen Les Carron, and the crystallisation of a vision for the society led by John Dargavel, Charles Fahey, and Kevin Frawley were notable. The conference gave me a valuable forum for presenting, and gaining feedback on, aspects of my draft PhD's literature review.

The 1992 Creswick conference was held at the old Victorian School of Forestry, and we toured the nearby nurseries, model plantations, goldfields forests and heritage mill. There, the strong Victorian representation showed the value of a comprehensive regional approach and made a strong nexus between historical research and heritage management, thanks particularly to foresters Eric Moulds, Norm and David Endacott, historians Tom Griffiths and Linden Gillbank, and the Historic Places contingent including Tom Griffiths, Peter Evans, Paul Barker, Charles Fahey, and Jane Lennon. Jane's insights into the political realities and challenges of managing heritage values, and Peter's meticulous industrial archaeologies focussing on timber tramways, were to continue through most of our conferences. Many of the Victorians shared their knowledge of Gippsland forests and forestry with me (as did Moray Douglas and Anita Brady in subsequent conferences).

The 1996 Jervis Bay conference included seminars from notable environmental historians Eric Rolls, Donald Hughes, and Tim Bonyhady. Peter Evans' eloquent paper on fire refuges, Norm Endacott's challenge to the old growth forest debate, and Norm Houghton's innovative fieldwork were memorable. Terry Birtles' lavishly illustrated presentation added to the growing information on Aboriginal uses of Australasian forests. The bay environment with dolphin-spotting on the dinner cruise was beautiful, and expert advice came on the management of local forests from John Banks and John Dargavel, and wildlife by Sue Feary, and Dan Lunney.

Attention then shifted north in 1999 to the sub-tropical forests of Gympie, with memorable

papers such as human influences and wild nature by Tom Heinsohn, school gardens by Libby Robin, Judith Bennett on the Solomons, and Paul Star on New Zealand's provincial forestry (that stimulated my own work on localism). Brett Stubbs's work on the historical geography of forests and forest clearance in New South Wales proved of great value to various aspects of my own research, and added to the growing contingent of historical geographers who have contributed to the Society. The Society's inimitable bard, Mark Allen, again made short work of the conference—including my post-modernist pretensions! Lasting memories of the post-conference tour of Fraser Island included timber milling displays, 'Blitz-bomb' bush-bashing, the mercurial dingoes, moonlit strolls through the rainforest down through the dunes to the roaring surf, an impromptu talent quest, turtle-infested crystal creeks and lakes, and Aboriginal elders to guide us through a sacred landscape.

Links to sophisticated indigenous land management were maintained through Tasmanian archaeologist Denise Gaughwin and Aboriginal woman Kaye McPherson at the next conference, in Hobart in 2002. Kaye's joint convict and Aboriginal ancestry and Peter MacFie's rich histories of colonial Van Diemen's Land reminded us of the complexity of the past, while early Chinese and medieval European forests were the scene of papers from Mark Elvin and Jan Oosthoek. The hundreds of bikies who swelled the ranks of visitors during our stay at Port Huon would have been impressed by the feisty Sigrid Schwenk's big game hunting credentials! Thankfully, as they were deafened by the roar of their 'hogs' I survived my quip 'what's the difference between a Harley Davidson and a vacuum cleaner? (the Harley has the dirtbag on the top!). In fact many of the bikies later proved appreciative visitors to the local timber museum as some of their more erudite entries in the guestbook attested. Curly Humphreys' and John Dargavel's knowledge of Tasmanian forestry came to the fore, and John's play 'Hard Work to Starve' was presented hilariously by members of the Geveston community, among them descendents of the timber strike. The tour of the lichen-festooned southern forests, the treetop Tahune skyway atop

the Huon and Celery pines, and the wooden boat-building school were highlights, and I welcomed Dan Lunney's encouragement to research and publish a chapter on the history of forest fauna as portrayed in Victoria's popular press. During the next few years I collaborated on trans-Tasman forest history with both Paul Star and James Beattie, and always valued Mike Roche's advice. James noted some of those trans-Tasman links in his inaugural paper at the Western Australian conference, which I was sorry to miss. Doubtless, the organisation of that conference by Society stalwart Jenny Mills would have helped to guarantee success.

Jenny's sensitive portrayal of her family's development of the Western Australian timber industry was a highlight of the 2007 Christchurch conference. So too a range of works by researchers on both sides of the Tasman on aspects of New Zealand forestry, including a richly illustrated guest lecture on timber tramways by Paul Mahoney. Exciting papers by a host of new members including Benedict Taylor and Peggy James, and many of them young scholars, were particularly significant. Thanks to Sybil Jack, James Beattie and Lawrence Niewojt, my own work on Victoria's pastoral pioneers of arboriculture was later expanded into a paper on Scottish forestry (and one I delivered for James on Scottish-trained doctors) at the Sixth Celtic Conference in Sydney 2007, as well as further research on Western District settlement. John Taylor, who had been a forester in western Victoria, also gave a fascinating paper there on Scottish botanical collectors in China. The spectacular alpine and coastal scenery of the west coast of the South Island provided the backdrop for an unforgettable study tour, brilliantly organised and led by Eric Pawson and Paul Star.

And so to the twentieth anniversary seminar this May, in the very same room at CRES. John and Jane surveyed the Society's two decades of achievements and, as it had at most of our conferences, debate turned to the future of forest history and environmental history in general. I, along with a keen bunch of other forest historians, was grateful for the opportunity to discuss my latest research, this time on the role

of the gold mining industry in Victorian forest conservation before the Great War.

The Society's greatest strengths include its eclecticism, mentoring, networking, and encouragement—all traits exemplified and facilitated by life-member John Dargavel. His wide-ranging research includes individual and team-delivered papers on labour history, memorial avenues, forest age, historiography, and biography (such as recent work on Lane Poole); he continues to foster foresters and forest historians young and old; his strategic scholarly networks are international in their scope and regularly reported on in the Society's newsletter; his works are widely published; and his generosity has enriched what has truly become a small band of 'dear friends'.

Stephen Legg



After the successful performance of his play *Hard Work to Starve*, John Dargavel warns that 'those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it' (Photo: S.Legg)





AFHS EARLY HISTORY REMINISCENCES

To help me to reminisce, I have just struggled to get down from my bookshelves all my volumes of *Australia's Ever Changing Forests*—the proceedings of most of those happy Australian Forest History Society conferences I have attended for over twenty years. These papers by many prominent international and national professionals in the many fields that represent the forests are a more than valuable addition to global forest and environmental history.

Behind the scenes and responsible for the success of the AFHS is John Dargavel. I never guessed when I met a shy forester and his mate on board the P & O ship *Iberia* in October 1956 that we would become life-long friends through our shared interest in forest history. No doubt on board ship I bored the foresters with talk of the West Australian jarrah and karri forests because I was a timberman's daughter and my family's whole life was centred around the West Australian forests. John and his friend were going to South Australia as graduate foresters and I probably teased them about that state's lack of native forest. I had been at Art School in London. We all played liar dice and drank together.

I never thought then that I would meet John at ANU twenty-five years later. By then John was a serious forest historian at the ANU Centre For Resource and Environmental Studies. He also had links with the Forestry School. He was writing about the Australian timber trade from a Marxist point of view which I must admit opened my eyes a bit. I was writing a more conservative history for the West Australian timber and hardware company Bunnings Ltd. Historian Geoffrey Bolton, professor of the newly established Environmental Studies course at Murdoch University, W.A., and author of the recently published Australian environmental history *Spoils and Spoilers* (1981), was supervising my work.

Bunnings passed on a letter from John inviting someone to attend a small forest history meeting that John was organising at the Forestry School at ANU Canberra. It was in 1981. John had just returned from an American Forest History

Conference in the USA and he was all fired up. Bunnings agreed to shout me to the meeting. John met me at Canberra airport. I was shy and distressed because I could not find my case and there was only one left on the carousel and that had a broken strap and clothes hanging out, including a bra. 'Surely not mine?'—but it was, and I was even more embarrassed.

I stayed at Ursula College, and John's conference met for a couple of days in an upstairs room with the light shining through long windows. I remember that among the various people attending Graydon Henning discussed the USA Pacific timber trade with Australia, and Kevin Frawley talked about Queensland forestry. Bunnings had been involved in milling at Cairns and Cooktown in the early 1950s. Kevin had just finished his PhD. I was surprised to find the interaction between the early Tasmanian and West Australian timber industry. In the late 19th century, key personnel were shifted interstate by the powerful British Millars Combine. Early sawmill and bush falling technology was shared and adapted to various needs across Australia. There was also the West Australian connection with the international New Zealand Kauri Timber Company. Western Australia was not as isolated as I had thought.

John took us to the Australian Archives and I found valuable information on Western Australia's second and most influential Conservator of Forests, C. E. Lane Poole, later founder of the Australian Forestry School in Canberra. As a leading scientific forester and the instigator of the Western Australian Forests Act 1918 he was my hero. I wanted to write a play about him. Lane Poole fought strenuously against the Western Australian Government and the local saw millers to establish his Forests Act and oust the Millars Combine from large tracts of leased forest. He could not beat the Combine and retired in anger in 1921. At the end of the conference John and Ricki took me to dinner at University House and I felt 'this is civilisation!'

John followed up this first meeting with two complementary forest history conferences back to back, *Australia's Ever Changing Forests* and *Changing Tropical Forests*, in May 1988. The impetus for these two conferences came from an International Union of Forest Research



Organisations (IUFRO) initiative to encourage an interest in forest history in both Australia and its surrounding tropical countries. Editorial help for the publication of the papers was given by such familiar names as Kevin Frawley, Noel Semple and Kay Dixon.

At the end of the *Australia's Ever Changing Forests* conference the Australian Forest History Society was founded. The aim of the Society was to involve as many academic disciplines as possible. Forest and Aboriginal heritage as well as forest values were covered. Thanks to John Dargavel's vision, the Society's constitution established a platform where everyone with a forest interest could have a say. This was a unique situation in Australia at a crucial time of considerable discussion and dissent about the advent of the wood chipping industry within the Australian forests with its impact on communities, wildlife and flora. Within the Society everyone could speak and surprisingly arguments never became bitter.

Many international and national academics gave papers at the first two conferences. Among the Australians there was a long list of names that have continued to have an active interest in the Society over the past twenty years. They included Sue Feary, Kevin Frawley, Jane Lennon, Stephen Legg, Norm Houghton and Dan Lunney. We were also lucky to have that father of Australian Forestry history Les Carron, who as a student forester and lecturer had known Lane Poole at the Australian Forestry School. Another forester, the eccentric Frank Podger was there also. Frank was famous for isolating the jarrah dieback disease *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in Western Australia in 1965. Frank was an old friend from my university days. As a student he always had his shirt hanging out at the back and it was the same thirty years on at the conference.

Among the international visitors was the President of the American Forest History Society, H.K. Steen, and the larger than life British environmental historian, Richard Groves, quite young then, but very impressive with his paper on the historical influences of the British empire on the environment in Africa and India. There was the highly respected Dutch historian Peter Boomgaard who talked about the Dutch East India Company and its colonial impact on

Java. American Richard S. Tucker talked about the timber trade in British colonial India and the American held Philippines.

Between the two conferences, Kevin Frawley organised a bus to take those who wished on a wonderful jaunt for about three days out of Canberra to Tumbarumba, Albury and over the border into Victoria. John Banks was just back from overseas and he showed us those mountain ghost gums [snow gums] just out of Canberra. I am sorry that I have forgotten their names. We visited arboretums, plantations, a vineyard, forests and sawmills. What I remember most is Richard Tucker being the only person who knew all the words of *Waltzing Matilda* which he had learnt as a boy scout on camping trips in America, and boiling a billy by the running waters at Wee Jasper out of Canberra. Richard and his wife had never boiled a billy, so at Gundagai I bought a large tin of coffee and emptied out the coffee; the kind man in the shop fitted some wire for a handle and off we went to Wee Jasper. That trip was incredible fun and it would be really good to repeat it one day.

Since the founding of the Australian Forest History Society in 1988 there have been six more conferences and the Society has grown from strength to strength. The second *Australia's Ever Changing Forests* conference was held at the old Forestry School at Creswick in Victoria in December 1992. History relates many bitter battles between the Victorian foresters at Creswick and the scientific foresters of the Lane Poole school. Jane Lennon, then Manager of Historic Places Branch, Victorian Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, helped John Dargavel with this conference and kindly drove me to Creswick from Melbourne. It was here that I met the New Zealander Mike Roche. I think that Mike was the first New Zealander to join the Society. Mike, John and I jointly presented a paper on the Kauri Timber Company. Mike's interest brought in other New Zealanders such as Paul Star and James Beattie, and ultimately led to the wonderful Australian Forest History Conference in Christchurch in 2007.

Jane brought along members from her department who were to stay with the Society over the years. Peter Evans talked splendidly and

dramatically on the heritage values of timber railway formations and old sawmill sites. The elegant Tom Griffiths raised issues about the beautiful ash forests of Victoria in his paper *Secrets of the Forests*, a precursor to his book (1992) of the same name. Here was an environmental historian who would go far and become one of Australia's most respected authors. Tom's wife Libby Robin is also an appealing environmental author and the presenter of many excellent papers at AFHS conferences where she invariably wins the prize for best paper.



Society members inspecting forest ruins, Creswick conference 1992 (Photo: S. Feary)

It is hard to condense so many wonderful memories. There was the conference at Jervis Bay in November 1996 where two outstanding internationals gave papers. One was the American J. Donald Hughes, in the process of writing a world environmental history, and the other was the delightful English environmental historian Oliver Rackham from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It is hard to describe Oliver with his matching red shorts and socks and always with numerous Mediterranean-type cloth bags, carrying cameras, notebooks and binoculars strung about him.

Oliver came to stay with us in Western Australia after the conference, and it was great to go into our nearby jarrah forest and watch him entranced with our West Australian bush. The award winning author Eric Rolls of *They All Ran Wild, A Million Wild Acres* and many other books came with his wife Elaine van Kempen and shared a picnic supper with the conference. Elaine and I snuck off together to a nearby shop

to replenish the, what we considered, diminishing wine flagon supply for the picnic.

I missed the very successful Queensland conference organised by Margaret Kowald but she gave me good advice when my turn came to organise a national conference in Western Australia in 2004. All the conferences and Society activities have brought to the fore many special people and papers, and happy interaction between disciplines. Every conference has memories. When I remember the Hobart conference in 2002 one cannot forget John Dargavel's play about the 1907 timber strike in Tasmania. What fun we all had booing baddies and cheering the strikers! How nice it was to meet IUFRO members Elisabeth Johann and Jan Oosthoek at that conference.

There are so many people within the Society that I admire for their work. Kaye McPherson and Judith Bennett whom I met and shared a room with on the Tasmanian field trip. Sybil Jack who entertained us enormously on the New Zealand tour to the West Coast; we sat under a hedge eating lunch while she talked knowledgeably about Medieval dunnies (toilets) and how steep the drop was in each castle and how assassins would climb up them to murder kings! There is Brett Stubbs our current president, and Paul Star the convenor of the wonderful New Zealand conference, Peter Davies, Anitra Nelson, Roger Heady, Peter Holzworth, Alison Specht and Mark Allen, our own poet. No conference is complete without his wind-up summary in verse. I don't know how he does it.

Everything appears to come around and tie together in the world of the Australian Forest History Society as we learned in Western Australia when we organised a national AFHS conference at Augusta near Cape Leeuwin. It was our popular committee member Mike Calver from the School of Biological Sciences at Murdoch University who came up with theme for the conference '*a forest conscienceness*'. Mike wrote in his foreword to the proceedings that this came from Lane Poole who in 1920 'looked forward to a time when people would develop a "forest conscienceness" and ensure that the forests were managed for the benefit of whole communities...'. As a committee we never actually knew if Lane Poole had made a

mistake with his wording and just meant conscience, but we thought conscienceness had an extra special meaning. Geoffrey Bolton summed it all up for us in his poem ‘*The Apotheosis of Charles Lane Poole*,’ read at the Augusta dinner. After several verses Lane Poole, returned from the dead, visits the AFHS Conference:

*Lane Poole discovered a motley crew
 Who covered every point of view.
 Some were timbermen, some were Green
 And most were something in between.
 But all could argue with propriety,
 All felt at home in that Society,
 They liked their food, they liked their drinking,
 But they did lots of lively thinking.
 They only had one small complaint,
 They had not got a patron saint.
 So Lane Poole took their mild petition
 That he should serve in that position.*

Here I would like to say best wishes to John Dargavel . His biography of Charles Lane Poole, to be published by the University of WA Press, is due out soon, and we are all anxiously waiting to read it.

Jenny Mills



LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

It is a great honour to be given an opportunity to reminiscence and reflect on the Society’s endeavours over the last twenty years. After looking at the contributions of other inaugural Society members (one of the perks of being the co-ordinating editor!), I concluded that there were two ways to respond. I could place myself outside the narrative and give a scholarly, but depersonalised account of the Society. Or, I could place myself firmly within the narrative. I have chosen the latter. Although it may be self-indulgent, it is unashamedly so, for when we

reflect on the Society, surely we reflect on how it has touched us personally?

I don’t really remember how I came to be part of the AFHS. John Dargavel thinks that it arose from his links with some people in the then Forestry Department at ANU, whose research included Aboriginal forest heritage. Fortunately for me, John believed that Aboriginal history and culture should be a part of Australian forest history and I was asked to give a presentation on that subject at the Society’s first conference in 1988.

At the time I was employed as an archaeologist with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, but having come from a background in the natural sciences, I had always been interested in the relationship between humans and their natural environment. This interest was further fostered by the ‘new archaeology’ being taught while I was a student in the Prehistory and Anthropology Department at ANU. This new approach moved away from searching for the oldest and deepest sites, which had consumed Australian archaeologists for decades, to a regional landscape approach, where models for understanding traditional Aboriginal hunter-gatherer economies were reconstructed from looking at patterns of Aboriginal sites in an imagined ancient cultural landscape. Such an approach was essential if we were ever to understand anything about how Aboriginal people connected with Australia’s forested landscapes.

That was exactly what I was attempting to do in 1988. I was deeply entrenched in warfare (there is no other word for it) between NPWS and the NSW Forestry Commission over logging native forests on the NSW far south coast. During the mid-1980s, integrated logging in the Eden Forest Management Area to meet Japanese quotas for woodchips was being criticised by conservation groups, and NPWS was coming under mounting pressure to provide conclusive scientific evidence on the impacts of integrated logging on forest biodiversity. The focus was on nature conservation, and consideration of Aboriginal values and interests was low on the agenda. However, because Aboriginal sites in NSW are protected by the same legislation that protects fauna and flora, cultural heritage had to be

addressed in the NSW Forestry Commission's 1987 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for woodchip exports. Hence I was included in the NPWS survey team collecting data to use in the NPWS response to the EIS, and I undertook several archaeological surveys in the Eden forests. Bob Carr, the NSW Environment Minister at the time, joined us in the forests and made forest history when he agreed to the conversion of the highly contested Tantawangalo and Coolangubra State Forests into what was to become the South East Forests National Park (see photo below).



Making forest history: Environment Minister Bob Carr in Tantawangalo State Forest in 1987
 (Photo: S.Feary)

It was timely that the Society's first conference was coming up, as it presented an opportunity to put the results of the surveys into the public arena. But, when I approached my boss for approval to give a paper, he turned down my application. He said the situation was too explosive because of the highly political nature of forest debates and recent media attention surrounding the Forestry Commission's destruction of a large Aboriginal site. He was concerned that anything I said about Aboriginal sites in forests could be construed as being critical of the Forestry Commission, potentially undermining the negotiations that were occurring at the time. I tried to tell him that it was to be merely a meeting of scholars with wide ranging interests in forest history, but he would have none of it, refusing, understandably, to believe that anything about forests could be apolitical. Another NPWS employee, forest ecologist Dan

Lunney, was having similar problems to me, and even CSIRO scientists working on forest issues were being gagged.

Anyway, both Dan and I gave our papers at the conference, enjoying a rare moment when forest politics was refreshingly absent. However, I do remember Noel Semple asking me whether forestry operations destroyed Aboriginal sites. I think that was precisely the sort of question that was concerning my boss. On returning to work I was severely reprimanded, but it was worth it, because it was that first conference that set me on a journey that culminated recently in my completion of a PhD on the relationship between Aboriginal Australians and the forest sector.

I loved the Society in those early years. Although I will always claim that scholarly research into forests can never really be separated from the political and social milieu of their management, it was therapeutic to discover people who engaged with forests, forestry, and forest history in so many different ways and who understood the forests and their history through eyes and brains unsullied by politics.

The second conference was at the Creswick forestry school in Victoria, where my growing interest in cross-disciplinary approaches to understanding the relationship between nature and culture was reinforced by the diverse range of topics. What I remember most is being mesmerised by Tom Griffiths' paper on the environmental history of Victoria's great mountain ash forests. Tom's amazing capacity to add meaning to the landscape was put to the test later, when the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (of which I was a member) engaged him and Libby Robin to undertake research into the cultural significance of scientific research in the Australian Alps National Parks. Called *Science in High Places* and published in 1994, it led to many other related studies and fundamentally changed the way the Alps Committee perceived mountains.

Even better than discovering Tom Griffiths and other like-minded people, attendance at the second conference and my involvement in the Society led me to Gregg Borschmann. Gregg was working for the National Library on an

ambitious project to captures people’s thoughts and memories about their associations with forests—from timber workers to eco-feminist philosophers—through an Australia-wide oral history program. I couldn’t believe it when he asked me to write an essay for his book, *The People’s Forests*, which would accompany the oral histories (although, I suspect John Dargavel may have had something to do with it). After reading my first attempt, Gregg said (in a nice way) that it was turgid and too bureaucratic, so we sat down and did it together at his home in the Blue Mountains. It was wonderful working with Gregg and a great privilege to contribute to his book, which for me is one of the great books encapsulating the real meaning and values of forests to people.



Lunch time during Aboriginal site surveys in the southeast forests in the 1990s (Photo: NPWS)

In 1997 I helped to organise the third conference, which was held at Jervis Bay on the NSW south coast, where I had recently moved to take up a position as Area Manager with NPWS. Those of you who attended may recall that I abrogated my responsibilities as tour guide in favour of rescuing a stranded dolphin. For the next seven years, stranded dolphins and a myriad of other protected area management issues took my attention away from forest history, but it was never far from my mind. It was central to the acrimonious debates about fire frequencies and how often NPWS should burn its estate—to do it ‘like the Aborigines did’—even though there is

no credible scientific evidence to indicate how the Aborigines burnt the tall open eucalypt forests of the south coast.

In 2004, I found myself back at ANU in a reinvented Forestry Department, the School of Resources, Environment and Society, doing a PhD in not quite forest history, but in something certainly related closely to it. Here my interest in Aboriginal associations with forests expanded to embrace the historic period and the realisation of a rich but largely unwritten history of Aboriginal employment in sawmills and in timber cutting. The most recent Society conference in New Zealand gave me an opportunity to make comparisons between the tumultuous and bloody history of cedar getting in Australia with that of seemingly more benign kauri getting in New Zealand.

Stimulated by the reflections theme, I trawled though old issues of the newsletter and was reminded of what an amazing array of information they contain! Proceedings of conferences reminded me of the many conversations held at the conferences, of the exchanges of ideas, and of the invention of new projects. There is no doubt that the Society has carved out a niche for itself, where its broad-based integrated perspective on the many histories embedded in forests can be brought together.

The future of the Society lies in maintaining its special place, in fostering interchange of thoughts and ideas. Although the Society was never meant to be a lobby group, it could consider encouraging development of methods and theories for integrated research by the social and natural sciences into the manufacture, maintenance and significance of cultural landscapes.

Sue Feary





A RAMBLE AROUND AUSTRALIAN FORESTS

For anyone interested in Australian history, 1988 was a grand year. It was the bicentennial of European settlement of Australia and, although promoted through well funded programs as a coming of age of our nation, it also encouraged serious debate, dissent and other perspectives. Hundreds of historians and interested others (economists, geographers, archaeologists, journalists and librarians) had collaborated for about a decade to produce the 10 volume *Australians: A Historical Library* published in that year. The series represented a new approach to our history, but unfortunately forests received little attention.

It was also the year the Australian Forest History Society was established to ‘advance historical understanding of human interactions with Australian forest and woodland environments.’

I am an historical geographer trained in deciphering patterns in the landscape and had worked as a national parks planner, and the Society offered an encouraging venue in which to discuss my work and its issues. The inaugural meeting in 1988 presented a group of topics which foreshadowed many later proceedings: ecological history of Australia from a ‘deep time’ viewpoint, forests and Aboriginal society, public forestry, regional approaches to forestry, national parks and conservation, sources for forest history research, and a North American perspective. It generated much excitement among the participants by gathering such a diverse group to discuss the history of Australia’s forests.

At this time I was deeply involved in debates within the Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands about the role of historical evidence in debunking ‘green myths’ arising from interest groups opposing logging in native forests and promoting wilderness in National Parks. At the inaugural meeting of our society I gave a paper entitled *Timeless Wilderness? The Use of Historical Source Material in Understanding Environmental Change in Gippsland, Victoria* in which I presented a detailed case study of

Wilson's Promontory, the ‘cornerstone of the continent’ as Matthew Flinders aptly called it.

The eastern part of Wilson's Promontory is a designated wilderness zone because it is seen as ‘remote and untouched’, a result of management from 1951 which allowed natural regrowth of the forest. What does ‘wilderness’ mean in this context? And for how long could it survive given the history of dynamic landscape change resulting from 150 years of intermittent usage? Frequent fire associated with over a century of stock grazing along the western coastline and Yanakie isthmus has had a major effect on the landscape and the vegetation; then a policy of almost total suppression of fire led to a huge fuel build up resulting in the inevitable high intensity wildfire which started a new round of changes in the vegetation.

In the nineteenth century the eastern side was the occupied side with sealing, whaling, fishing and timber milling and constant shipping traffic. The sites are archaeological in type and managed by being left alone as dots on the maps, but their wider cultural landscape is not conserved as such and regrowth forest has overtaken many of the traces. Since 1987 the management objective has been to allow natural processes to continue with a minimum of disturbance, except where habitat manipulation is desirable. However, heritage places, those with field evidence of historic activities, require site-specific manipulation to protect them.

Wilderness is more popular than historical industries like logging and whaling, now regarded as exploitative, but the Refuge Cove site is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register and cannot be ignored. The parks service has made the wilderness area by closing vehicular access to the east coast and playing down the heritage values and sites in the northern section of the park. It is a post-modern reading of the landscape where you see what you want to see (wilderness) and fail to see what you don't want to see (the evidence of prior uses and occupation) despite the surveys and photographs from the early 1900s.

Yet in 1988, I had argued that historical research at the local level would help in understanding ecological change—the Hoskins approach of landscape reading as a new history. The Wilsons

Promontory landscape assessed in 1987 as wilderness was a result of management over the previous thirty years which allowed natural processes to continue. Regrowth, fire and recreation activities had contributed to obliterating surface evidence of nineteenth century sites of occupation, and a large section of the public (uninformed and often urban-based) did not want to know the facts of the more recent past—the 200 years of European impact on the landscape is regarded as degradation, and they want national parks as primeval places with 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation in harmony with the ancient landscape.

This new environmental nationalism is a romantic view not borne out by the scientific and historical facts which allow us to determine the sequence of occupation and the effects of that occupation on the landscape. This information then enables us to read or interpret the existing landscape (Hoskins's 'new history'). Historical research is an essential component of the natural resource management planning process as humans have been and continue to be an ecological agent in the landscape. In a hundred years most human impacts will not be evident and the place will be regarded again as a wilderness. The issue is what is sacrificed in this process of evolution—the elimination of heritage sites and the stories about human use and occupation of the land. Maybe the public is happy to lose these.

The new reading of the Victoria's landscape that I had been advocating in 1988 was made difficult by the professional disciplines of those involved in our park management: the botanists examining individual species requirements while unsure of the large scale ecosystem dynamics; the archaeologists who had discovered Aboriginal antiquity and wanted to dominate site identification and management; the historians researching a new social history but unable to read the physical evidence of that remaining in the landscape; and architects who understood evolution of structures but regarded wrecks and ruins in the bush as having little value.

The 1988 conference gave support for my ideas and led to continuing studies of landscape change based on historical evidence, and to my PhD on the subject of cultural landscape

conservation in Australia. Papers which I presented at subsequent AFHS conferences—Creswick, Gympie, Jervis Bay, Hobart, Augusta—tested some of these hypotheses, as I was a heritage place manager in an environment dominated by natural resource managers and needed to hone my arguments to achieve new integrated approaches to site conservation. These debates, often lubricated by the wines of the local region, led to long lasting friendships.

During the 1990s public land management changed in some states, and some heritage places with a range of cultural values were recognised as cultural landscapes. This shift occurred partly in response to the need to assess heritage values in the contested forests of Australia subject to the Regional Forest Agreement process, and partly due to changes to the World Heritage cultural criteria for listing places to include cultural landscapes arising from indigenous interactions with the land over millennia.

While it could be argued that these shifts were a further separation of landscapes from places, such as archaeological sites, historic buildings and remnant cultural vegetation, in reality they contributed to managers at last realising that these places had a history which influenced the structure of the contemporary landscape and should be considered in its management. Natural and cultural values form a conceptual continuum in the landscape rather than discrete parts of it. New methodologies for assessing intangible, social and aesthetic values were used in examining large scale landscapes and provided some new directions. It promised an exciting enrichment of knowledge about forests and their management.

The Regional Forest Agreement process identified a large number of places with national estate values, which under the agreements were to be listed in the Register of the National Estate. The total number of places identified was around 3,000. Listing forest heritage places in the Register of the National Estate was to be the culmination of what could be described as the greatest environmental assessment ever done in Australia, and was an important Commonwealth commitment. However, only the listings for East Gippsland have gone through the statutory

processes and have been entered in the Register of the National Estate. The RFA process was overtaken by the effective championing at the national level of other environmental issues like dryland salinity and the state of waterways. The will to finish the task dissipated and the process was terminated by the new Commonwealth heritage legislation of 2003.

Credible heritage assessments require information on the historical as well as biophysical attributes of the place so that like can be compared with like. To this end the AFHS has contributed much through its conferences, where researchers have debated the chronologies and typologies of forest places. An analysis of Australian Forest History Society papers since 1988 highlights its important role in promoting the forest as a heritage place in 'Australia's ever changing forests'. For me this contribution is invaluable and continually offers the fellowship of others working in forest studies.

The AFHS hosted a key meeting on *Forest Age and Heritage Values* in 1996 which explored concepts of age including the then fashionable old growth, and it was clear that the assessment of complex forest values is not served by any single approach. The conclusions put by John Dargavel about public understanding and public processes of assessing and protecting forest heritage remain, sadly, very relevant today. These included the need to increase funding of cultural and social aspects of forest research—in comparison with ecological research; the application of forest structural or silvicultural categories used in defining old growth to cultural values as well to ensure a comprehensive cultural heritage of all forest types; the great challenge of integrating natural and cultural values in understanding the complexity of forests and meshing them with community education and public participation programmes; and the collection and archiving of RFA information so that it provides benchmarks for monitoring change in forest land transferred to management by park agencies.

But it seems that heritage and history is in crisis in Australia despite heritage protection legislation in every State and Territory. For the first time since the Gorton government

[1968–71] there is no Commonwealth funding for historic heritage programs. Is this due to lack of public concern, or funding going to other cultural heritage areas like museums? Does AFHS have a role in advocating for increased awareness of cultural values in forests—developing the 'forest conscienceness' so beloved of Lane Poole? And if so, how will we do this in the future?

In these times infected with post-modern frameworks of investigation, it is essential to continue evidence-based studies of our forests then allow artistic depictions to flow. What should be our role in conserving these places identified in previous surveys as exhibiting that understanding of human-forest interaction? My suggestions are:

- Addressing the 'The Great Australian Silences in Forest History' that John Dargavel outlined in 2002—namely indigenous use and meanings in the timber industry, forests and parks; public forests other than state forests; private and leasehold forests; and plantations; this will also encourage more detailed environmental histories of a range of forest types.
- Advocating active conservation works to a representative selection of forest industry work sites—say 300 of the 3,000 identified as heritage markers in an ever-changing forest landscape.
- State-based members of AFHS making submissions to park management plans and forest harvesting plans on public exhibition, advocating management techniques for reducing fuel loads around heritage items in the forest and interpreting their history.
- Advocating archival collection of public forestry records, dissemination of finding guides to their content and location for researchers, and their use in setting benchmarks for monitoring change in the forest landscape.
- Advocating regular monitoring of forest heritage sites; AFHS members could review these monitoring reports.

I wish for future gatherings of forest history folk to agree on courses of action and take responsibility for these projects and report back to the Society. If we are passionate enough we can maintain the interest and in time have more to offer future forest managers due to our consistent efforts.

Judith Wright's poem captures my continuing interest in understanding the dynamic and variable processes at work creating our forested landscapes, the interactions resulting from continuing use, degradation, modification, repair, abandonment, reservation and care:

*When first I knew this forest
 its flowers were strange.
 Their different forms and faces
 changed with the seasons' change—*

*Now that its vines and flowers
 are named and known,
 like long-fulfilled desires
 those first strange joys are gone.*

*My search is further.
 There's still to name and know
 beyond the flowers I gather
 that one that does not wither—
 the truth from which they grow.*

(Judith Wright, 1963)

Jane Lennon



AN AMERICAN IN CANBERRA

We were most honoured to have at our first conference, H. K. (Pete) Steen, President of the American Forest History Society. Pete presented a paper on the forest history of North America, noting that it had many parallels with Australia's.

Pete kept quite a detailed diary of his observations and activities while he was visiting Australia and attending our first conference in

Canberra and the fieldtrip to Tumbarumba. A few extracts from his diary are reproduced here, giving us a fascinating glimpse into one American's perspective on Australian forest history and Australian culture more widely. (*Ed*)

May 9: We walked a half-dozen blocks to campus and the conference. All was well organized, except the slide presentations. Some speakers looked at their shoes and others talked with their backs to the audience—by and large a typical academic offering. Coffee breaks were delightful on a sunny deck overlooking campus and town. There was a military flyover in honour of the Queen, who was dedicating the Parliament Building as we sipped. A huge water fountain in the distance.

May 10: More conference and good papers. Following the afternoon session was a 'book launch' for a forest history book that John had edited. Went very well, ate lots of goodies, and looked at Chinese brush drawings of Australian forestscapes.

May 11: The morning sessions dealt with archives, which seemed to be of broad interest, for there were many questions. Lunched at Ursula College and walked to the student union and the university library. I gave my adlibbed paper in the afternoon, and it seemed to go well—much better than the one I had prepared. Following adjournment, there was a business meeting to discuss formation of the Australian Forest History Society, which was done. It will begin with an informal structure, and its philosophy is patterned after FHS—kind of touching.

May 12: Up at 5:30 to pack for the fieldtrip, eating breakfast at the hotel next door. Warren picked us and the Tuckers up at 7:45; at 8:10 we left Ursula College for the "bush." Gail and I rode in the station wagon with Warren and John; all others rode in the bus. We stopped first at an arboretum, not very fancy by U.S. standards, which featured recreational amenities, and saw redwood, etc. The second stop showed eucalypts' fire history, an important part of the Australian story. Juice and biscuits (cookies) were served. Later John pointed to a radiata (Monterey) pine plantation that looked "combed:" every third row had been cut as part

of thinning. Low pruning done mainly for fire control, followed by high pruning for log quality.

Lunch was in the town of Tumut, in a retired military club, with lawn bowling, etc. Then we toured abandoned sawmill sites narrated by the owner, who was a real down-home character not at all impressed by the gaggle of academics. He said that the highest quality eucalyptus would bring \$1,400 per cubic meter at the mill. On route we saw a kangaroo dart across the road and also one dead in the road. Wombat too. We spent the night in a “bush” hotel in Tumberumba, with bath down the hall, and ample but plain fare.

May 13: We drove up the Murray River Valley to the site of a major forest fire in 1985 that burned 75,000 hectares. In 1939, fires had burned along a 1,000 kilometer front from Melbourne to Canberra. All caused by lightning. We examined abandoned railroad bridges and ate lunch in a rustic pub along the road. We viewed a reservoir and stopped at the historic town of Beechworth to see buildings of granite.

We were now running rather late and arrived at a high-tech sawmill in Myrtleford, just as the last shift was going home. A subsidiary of Bowaters, it is a sawmill, pulpmill and a plywood mill. It pays 25 percent above union scale to avoid labor problems. Then to the hotel and room with a bath!

May 14: We toured a red gum forest in a state park, where they were experimenting with water levels. Looked very much like the Everglades with black swans, pelicans, and many other birds. We stopped at Campbell’s Winery for a tasting and bought two bottles for later. Lunch was at another winery of upscale, yuppie type. Fancy food and ample wine. Gail sat with three folk from India, who said they could understand her much better than the Australians who “jabbered.”

Next stop was an old gold mine site. One of the guides told Gail that he had an Australian kettle dog. She checked the breed with Warren, who concurred. It turned out to be a “cattle” dog.

After a while, we tired of looking at the ironbark trees and walked up a “track.” Sure enough, two kangaroos/wallabies raced into the bush. Later, we stopped at our guide’s home, which had bee hives—60 pounds of eucalyptus honey per hive.

I talked with John about Aborigines; the whole topic is very controversial, as is the concept of a bicentennial that pretends there was nothing here before white settlement. He was determined to have these topics discussed at the conference, and he was very successful. We compared with U.S. Indians. John taught me a couple of Australian expressions: “Dag” (the soiled hair on a sheep’s rear) is a term of affection. And “beyond the black stump” (early settlers cleared by burning) marks the beginning of the real outback.’

Pete Steen (from his diary)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I am an environmental historian trying to write a comparative history of colonial policy towards sand drift in New Zealand, Australia and India. Other than the odd article in publications such as the *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, I have been struggling to find material on sand drift (or desertification) and its alleviation (through stabilisation & tree planting) in Australia. The period of my focus is 1840s–1920. I was wondering, for instance, if there was state policy such similar to New Zealand’s ‘Sand Drift Act’ of 1903?

John Dargavel has kindly given me some assistance, but any further help from my Tasman neighbours would be greatly appreciated.

James Beattie
 Department of History,
 The University of Waikato
 Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240,
 New Zealand.
 email: jbeattie@waikato.ac.nz





In response to Michael Orchard's article in the Australian Forest History Society Inc. Newsletter No. 49, June 2008, previously published in the New Zealand Institute of Forestry Newsletter No. 2008/19, 23 May 2008, I am pleased to be able to inform Mr Orchard that all is not lost!

When the NZ Forest Service set up the Forest Experiment Station in Rotorua in 1947 (which became Forest Research Institute in 1949), the scientists who went from the Forest Service to the Experiment Station took their records with them. With the break-up of the NZ Forest Service in 1987, the records from the head office in Wellington went to National Archives (now Archives New Zealand). The John Johns photograph collection went there also. They were supposed to go to Department of Conservation, but as the department was in temporary quarters, they went to Archives. As for the research records, including silviculture, tree registers, measurement samples of trees and logs, conservancy records, field books, plus maps and photographs, etc., these are held at Scion, which is the trading name for the New Zealand Forest Research Institute Ltd., in Rotorua.

I have been employed by Scion as Archivist, and my task is to organise the several storerooms in which these records are held, list them and box them. In my initial re-shelving (we installed new mobile shelving), the earliest documents I have found so far are from 1929 dealing with the planting of Waiotapu forest complete with photographs. These, of course, are from the New Zealand State Forest Service, the predecessor of the NZ Forest Service.

Obviously I do not know exactly what is held until I start listing all the documents, but a start has been made.

I hope this can be published in your next issue.

Thank you very much.

Tiena Jordan
Archivist
Scion
Jantiena.Jordan@scionresearch.com



Hi, my name is Jo Besley and I am a curator at Museum of Brisbane. I have just discovered the Australian Forest History Society website and newsletters.

We are currently developing an exhibition about the history and use of the timber Silky Oak (*Grevillea robusta*) in Queensland. Silky Oak has been chosen because the native habitat of the tree is a defined area surrounding Brisbane, and because the timber and the furniture created from it have such an iconic place in the history and culture of the state.

The exhibition will look at the botany and environment of Silky Oak, as well as the history of timber getting, saw milling and furniture manufacture in the 19th and 20th centuries in Brisbane. In addition it will include a diverse range of furniture and vernacular objects which will be explained and animated by stories and associated documentation.

I am currently casting a very wide net trying to track down as much information/stories/ photographs/artefacts as possible related to Silky Oak. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for me? Any assistance you may be able to give would be greatly appreciated. Perhaps it might be possible to put something about the exhibition in one of your newsletters?

Kind regards,

Jo Besley
A/ Senior Curator
Museum of Brisbane
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Joanna.Besley@brisbane.qld.gov.au

Sign up now for the latest news and events from Museum of Brisbane
www.museumofbrisbane.com.au



A plea from the editor

Expressions of interest are sought from Society members for the coveted role of

NEWSLETTER GUEST EDITOR

Editors are needed for putting together the next newsletter in December and all the 2009 issues.

If you are able to help with all or any, please contact Sue Feary on:

02 44286312 or suefeary@hotmail.net.au

**** STOP PRESS ****

**RECORD THESE DATES IN
YOUR DIARY NOW!**

The 8th Conference of the Australian Forest History Society Inc.

**will be held in Lismore, NSW,
from Monday 7 to Friday 11
June 2010**

It will be followed by a north-eastern NSW/south-eastern Queensland study tour.

More details to come, including a call for papers. **Watch the AFHS website.**

Lismore is a one-hour drive south of the Gold Coast (Coolangatta) Airport, which has flights to and from many major cities in Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. Lismore Airport has regular flights to and from Sydney per Regional Express. For more information about Lismore, see www.visitlismore.com.au

AFHS Membership

Membership of the Australian Forest History Society Inc is \$25 a year, or \$15 a year for students. For overseas addresses, 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 30 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

EFT to Commonwealth Savings Bank
BSB 062911, Account No. 1010 1753
(Please also return this form if you pay by EFT.)

Name:

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Please mark the box if you would like a receipt—otherwise an acknowledgment will be sent by email.



**Happy Society members in the forests of
NZ's South Island, AFHS Conference 2007**