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



An ancient *Angophora floribunda* guarding a perched swamp in Sharyn Munro's mountain forest.

Photo by Rick Haughton.

Guest Editor: Sue Feary
Newsletter Editor: Sue Feary
AFHS Address: PO Box 5128, KINGSTON ACT 2604
Web: www.foresthistory.org.au

sue.feary@environment.nsw.gov.au

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TRACES OF LIFE

The bowl in which she lived was shallow and green, set down and forgotten in an endless forest of bluegums, their mop heads forming its scalloped rim. A bony ridge like a skinny arm offered her bowl to the sky, palm up, tilted for easy drinking.

People said she lived alone here, and that it had been empty before she came. A literal observer would argue that she *was* alone as she sat at the table, slept in the bed, mused on the verandah. The same blinkered spy would claim the absence of pottery shards or rusting ploughshares as proof that none other had used this skybowl.

For her these things were not so clear. She had slept in a small tent while slowly building her little cabin from the earth and rocks and fallen trees; she could see how her predecessors might have lived so lightly on the land as to leave no traces.

She liked to nourish her intuition and imagination with facts, which were hard to come by for such a remote area, but it seemed possible the gentle Geawegal people may have used this mountain range. Over the years she had found stones that seemed deliberately shaped. She decided they were tools, perhaps lost while hunting the red-necked wallabies or camping by the paperbark fringes of the lagoons, the spring-fed "high altitude perched swamps" of these mountains. She would hold the stones, heft their weight, see her coarse and freckled celtic hands grow dusky fine grained skin, pink palms, pale nails - feel the stored knowledge.

Since this area was for so long untouched by white intruders, she wondered why these earlier bowl-dwellers disappeared. Perhaps they hadn't. Just retreated. There were still hundreds of square miles of wilderness to the north and north-east, terrain too rough even for the greedy cedar getters.

She imagined the People had kept closely to the mountains, only venturing down to the open world of the Kamilarois in times of necessity or desperate whim. Perhaps that's how it was: heading over to Bulahdelah and on to the coast for a shellfish treat; a misunderstanding, a trespass; overtaken by the Kamilaroi warriors, a battle; the tribe destroyed in one swift and savage hit, the women and children captured; the mountain bowls left uncared for.

But if not ... occasionally the senses played tricks up here.

The air was thinner, the bowl was often filled with cloud like cotton wool, the gumtree trunks shining like wet naked bodies, and between them every now and then a darker stringybark sapling would sway, and she would peer harder. The tall clumps of poa grass would shiver in the wake of something unseen, sticks crack suddenly, then all would be still again: a startled wallaby? Way down in the gully, lights would flicker erratically, like torches held in the hands of dancing bodies: fireflies? Yet there was a flat grassy spot just about there, perfect for dancing, and she was sure she'd once heard corroboree music from that

gully. Had it been just for a mistakable second or two, it could have been wind howling and koalas growling, tree branches clicking and swishing against each other, and the cacophonous chorus of frogs - but not for hours.

See there, now! A dark figure stands erect, proud, gaunt and sinewy, turns smoky eyes towards her - an Eastern Grey kangaroo. "So who is caring for us now? Who holds my totem, sings my song?" he reproaches with his long look.

There was rarely silence; the trees of the rim of her bowl rustled always, even if ever so slightly, in the updraft from the escarpment below. She-oaks sighed and whispered softly behind the backs of the bigger gums and stringies, restless young girls, impatient with solid men's business. Birds repeatedly called mad questions that yet seemed to need an answer; shy giggles wafted up the slope; courting wallabies gruffly cleared their throats; night birds boomed of woomera and didge. It was hard to say what "human" was anymore.

She had owned this bowl for 20 years, but its claim on her was more evident: her skin had begun to gather rough spots like the lichen on its rocks, her hair to turn as grey as the Old Man's Beard whose fluffy seedballs festooned the trees in its rain forest gullies, her body to mimic the inexplicable twists and turns of its rough-barked Angophoras.

People now seemed more loud of voice, brash of manner and empty of meaning than she remembered. The odd newspaper left behind by visitors revealed such idiocies on scales both grand and petty that no matter how quickly she mulched them, the headlines returned to cloud her thoughts for days.

Her city-bred daughter still visited. She had disapproved of the move to such an isolated place, yet as the years passed she could see her mother was happy. It would not suit *her*, liking her civilised pleasures and friends and her busy career as an architect too much, but she admired her mother's independence.

Lately, though, she had begun to worry about her. She spoke to her mother's old friends. They too, on their diminishing visits, had noticed changes. After all, they said to each other, she was in her seventies, she should think about moving to town, or at least get a mobile phone. They were finding her difficult to be with; always a bit odd, never quite adept socially, she seemed to have lost the art of conversation altogether. Her range of interests had narrowed so, they agreed, that she had become quite out of touch with the real world.

Real? she would have queried had she heard. Her world here was more real than any she'd ever lived in before.

Yet she had noticed changes too; over the last summer she had been less inclined to move about. The heat demanded she sit limply in the shade, eyes half-closed, and rest like a wallaby till the coolness of dusk. Then she would work a little in her garden before retiring to the verandah to eat and sleep in the fresh mountain dark.

Then the night-dwellers took over. Possums patrolled the verandah posts, antechinus scurried along the rafters, the tiger quoll sniffed round the bed, a powerful owl peered from the railing, koalas growled in the gums nearby. At dawn, the kookaburra chorus would follow shortly after the first currawong had skittered to a landing on the roof as a pre-wake-up call.

She would lie watching the wallabies in the far clearing sunning their pale underbellies, the crimson rosellas sampling their grass seed crop close by. When the sun's first rays stroked her face, she would get up, more stiffly than she used to, and take her breakfast. Fruit and water did her fine these days; she couldn't be bothered with toast or tea. Salad for lunch and dinner, although she still sometimes boiled the nutty little potatoes that hid under the weeds.

As autumn drew on and the fresher days that usually quickened her energy failed to do so, she spent more time slowly wandering about and finding good sitting spots to enjoy the now welcome warmth of the sun.

One ancient Angophora had always attracted her. Fallen before the winds long ago, it had yet clung to the earth with enough roots to live, growing as it lay, horizontally. She'd spent hours cradled in its outstretched curving limbs, reading, thinking, watching the clouds. It would gently sway with the slightest of pressure, but up and down, not side to side, because of its strange growth. It felt like being rocked to sleep and she had often succumbed, calling it her cradle tree.

She liked its botanical name too - *Angophora floribunda*. As she approached, she took to saying the name aloud, like a greeting to a fancifully named Victorian bluestocking, or perhaps a secret password, "*Angophora floribunda!*" Most people would have thought her crazy; her daughter only smiled indulgently, as she had often heard her mother murmur words of appreciation or encouragement to so-called inanimate objects.

Near this cradle tree was a round grassy depression in the ground, a minor bowl within the major skybowl. About thirty feet diameter and deep enough to be protected from the wind, it was enticingly warm, a sunbowl, and peaceful, while the westerlies noisily threatened the trees around it and when they resisted, tore up the slope to the ridge in disappointment.

It was only a fifteen minute walk from the cabin and she began to come there each day once the sun had dried the dew. She decided it must have been a perched swamp once, a water-holding bowl that now was dry but for some ancient and mysterious reason never grew anything but soft short green grass. Her daughter could offer no explanation. Probably only the People could. They might tell her if she sat quietly, listened intently, for long enough.

By winter she was spending all the sunlight hours there, abandoning her garden and her books, returning reluctantly to the cabin to sleep. She took only water with her for her day's sitting, which might have looked like meditation, but was not. Some of the time she'd watch the

creatures, the flocks of tiny thornbills like falling leaves, or the endless pattern of darting skinks playing hide-and-seek in the tussocks that ringed the little sunbowl's edge. Or she might just close her eyes and listen: she could hear the rustling of the Angophora's tassels of leaves and the slight rubbing of its convoluted boughs as they crisscrossed each other, and the wallabies' grunts and snorts and coughs as they met and challenged and wooed and mated in their endless social life.

Sometimes she thought she heard other voices, low, soft and secret, but feared to open her eyes, to startle them, make them vanish - or to see what she was not ready for.

She could surely hear the rush and urgent flap of the magpie's swoop, and once looked up to see it hunting off a low-flying wedgetail, which had probably thought she was dead, sitting so still and so exposed. Yet she had never felt more alive.

Except, increasingly, for the daily walk to and from the sunbowl. Her legs did not seem suited to walking anymore, their muscles limp, reluctant. In her sunbowl, sitting with her legs crossed, they formed the perfect base, keeping her balanced, while her upper body felt light, tingling with life. She was glad no one had come to visit for a while - or perhaps they had, but as she was out of sight and hearing of the cabin, she would not have known. Her skin now dry and scaly, mottled brown, her hair a windblown tangle, she had stopped changing her clothes, and barely remembered to eat.

One evening she did not have the energy to return to the cabin, although she knew she should before the cold air seeped into the sunbowl. Then, gradually, she became aware that it was counteracting the night chill with a warmth of its own, radiating back from the rocks below, she supposed, like a natural heat sink.

She shivered with pleasure at this unexpected gift: there was no need to return now. She shivered again with anticipation of the night, knowing she would not sleep, but would see, hear, share, the secrets of the night bowl-dwellers; perhaps, even, of those Others.

She sighed with contentment, her bones warming, relaxing towards the welcoming earth ... and was still.

It was a while before anyone knew she was missing; it was another week before they gave up looking. There were many deep gullies round the skybowl's rim, thickly wooded, covered with vines and edged with nettles; she could have fallen down any of them. She could even have walked right on into the wilderness, leaving no traces. After all, she had been getting a bit dotty. They might never discover what had become of her ...

Her daughter could not be reached till the search was over. Supposedly at a conference in Paris, she had actually been on a secret barge holiday down the Loire, with her married lover. Guilt quickly followed shock when she knew. Logically she accepted the lack of conclusions; emotionally she could not. The sole inheritor, she came for a rare weekend, but never alone, and staying close to the cabin, as if she were a child instead of an almost

middle-aged woman. The sleepless nights there were full of thoughts that would not bear exploring, but no tears had arisen from her grief, choked by the endless uncertainty.

About a year after, having come by herself for once, she felt shame at not caring for the place as her mother had. It was time to force herself to walk farther afield, perhaps to one of her mother's favourite spots, the cradle tree. Strange to be walking there on her own. She was nervous, almost afraid, though of what she could not say; it was too cold for snakes.

Cresting the last rise before the little gully near which the cradle tree grew, she frowned as she caught the flash of sun on water, where there should be none. She hurried down the slope. The water table must be up higher than usual, she thought. I'm sure there never used to be a soak here... there used to be...

She stopped, checked again the position of the cradle tree, and looked back at the little pool. Her heart began to thump as she realised it was right where the strange grassy hollow had been. In the centre of this new pool was a small green knoll, and from this knoll rose a slim young tree, already about twelve feet tall, limbs gracefully shaping arabesques and scrolls in imitation of its bigger neighbour.

She fought to comprehend. The last time she had been here, with her mother, they had remarked again on the hollow's mystifying bareness; that could only have been about 18 months ago. She dropped down by the grassy edge of the glistening pool, staring at the tree. A wind sprang up and the cradle tree began to softly rock and whisper as it always did. The young tree swayed gently in response, its tassels of light green leaves whispering back.

For a long time the daughter sat. She told herself that what she was thinking could not be, yet a less familiar voice from within told her it must be. If only she had been with the searchers, or come here sooner; had she seen this pool then, this tree so suddenly appeared, she would have been sure ...

She cleared her throat and addressed the little sapling in the tree-filled silence.

"*Angophora floribunda*", she said, smiling through the tears that welled at last.

Sharyn Monroe

sharyn@sharynmunro.com
www.sharynmunro.com

Winner of the Alan Marshall Open Short Story Award 2002

Sharyn writes in her solar powered mud brick cabin, living as sustainably as possible on her Wildlife Refuge in the mountain forests of the NSW Upper Hunter, where she is regenerating its perched swamps and rainforest gullies. Sharyn attended the 2009 Watermark Literary Muster which is reviewed later in the newsletter.

TREE AGE

I am a member of the Coal River Working Party based at Newcastle University, which is researching the early history of the Newcastle area. One aspect of our research is to investigate the exploration activities of Barralier, Paterson and Grant along the Hunter and Williams Rivers in 1801, which led to the opening up of the Hunter Valley cedar-cutting and coal mining by a convict settlement at Coal River (Newcastle).

Our group has recently located a tree which has a survey blaze which fits the general location and description given in reports of the exploration party. The blazed tree, which is on private property, was ringbarked some time after the blaze was cut, and is now dead. There is regrowth over the blaze.

Members of the CRWP include surveyors who have considerable experience in identifying the remains of old survey marks on trees, and in this case the blaze does not appear to fit in with any cadastral survey of the area. We would like to put an age on the tree, when it was blazed, and when it was ringbarked. Can you provide any information on whether these aims are achievable, and who is the best person or group to help us to do so?

To find out more about the 1801 expedition, please visit <http://coalriver.wordpress.com/2009/07/10/in-search-of-two-carved-trees-from-the-1801-expedition>.

Russell Rigby

icarigby@hunterlink.net.au

Ed's note: It may be possible to determine the age of the tree by using dendrochronology. Matthew Brookhouse recently completed a PhD involving tree ring counting and his article on the subject can be found in AFHS newsletter No. 51 (Jan 2009). He is at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, The Australian National University and can be contacted on matthew.brookhouse@anu.edu.au.



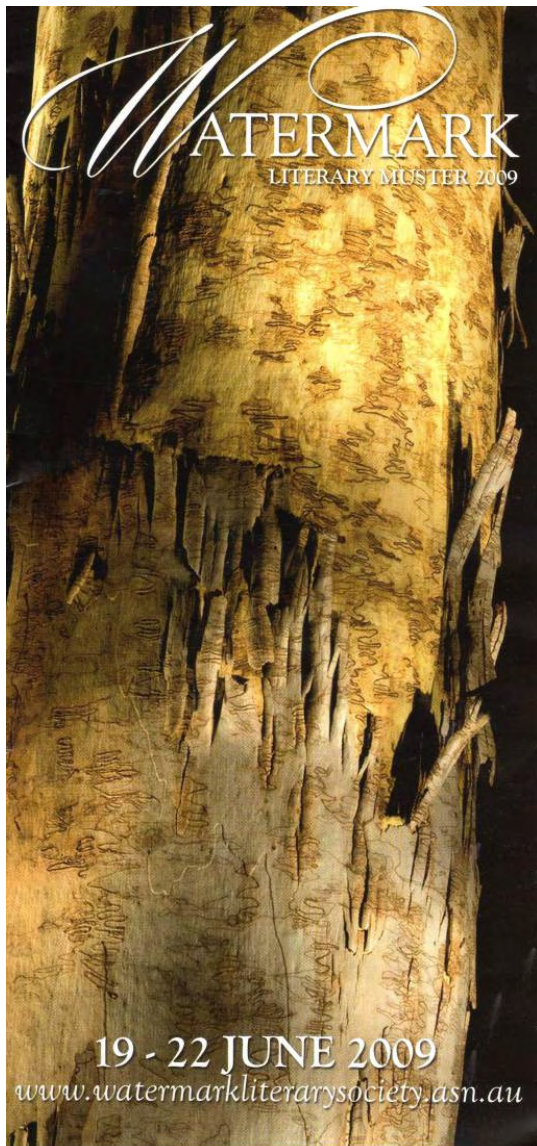
*Blazed tree recorded by
Coal River Working Party*

THE 2009 WATERMARK LITERARY MUSTER

The theme of the 2009 Watermark Literary Muster was 'The Nature and Place of Wood'. Several AFHS members and ex-members attended the Muster, including Jane Lennon, John Taylor, Tom Griffiths and Sue Feary. Roger Underwood was there in place of Society member Jenny Mills. Jane chaired a fiery forum of fire and John chaired one with the quirky title of "Wooden it be Lovely?" Tom was his usual eloquent self in his dedication to Eric Rolls. Roger and Sue each presented in a couple of sessions. I had initial misgivings about the concept of people sitting on a stage talking to each other in front of an audience but it worked very well and the breadth of discussion and views on forests and wood was exciting and refreshing.

The Muster is organised by the Watermark Literary Society which was formed in 2003 to celebrate the literature of nature and place. Go to www.watermarkliterarysociety.asn.au for details about the Festival's objectives and activities, including the upcoming 2011 festival. If you are interested in nature, nature writing, and new voices in Australian literature, presented in attractive surroundings, put it in your diary.

Sue Feary



THE MUSTER - A PERSPECTIVE FROM ROGER UNDERWOOD

When, out of the blue, I received an invitation to attend the Watermark Literary Muster in June this year, I viewed it with trepidation I have never attended a literary festival, and although I enjoy writing, I do not regard myself as a literary person. I imagined myself surrounded by distinguished poets, novelists and academics, a highbrow and elite gathering of the nation's literary intelligentsia. However, as the festival theme was trees and "the nature and place of wood" and was being held in the lovely little NSW forest town of Kendall, I decided to go.

I'm glad I did. In the first place Watermark is a literary festival with a difference. It is organised by the formidably intelligent and charming Elaine van Kempen, whose late husband Eric Rolls was festival patron, and whose spirit pervaded the week. I am a Rolls aficionado, having read all of his books over the years. Beautiful tributes to Rolls were presented by Tom Griffiths and Peter Hay to kick off the festival. Secondly, the festival was held in the lovely old Kendall Hall (now the School of Arts), with its cedar ceilings, tallow-wood floor and red mahogany weatherboards. Only persistent rain prevented us from planned walks in the beautiful blackbutt and blue gum forests nearby, but they were enjoyed from a distance, a misty backdrop to lunches and morning coffee on the broad timber veranda of the hall. Thirdly, the Festival participants and organisers were uniformly interesting and entertaining. I struck no elitism, only warmth and friendship.

The program was intense, but not overpowering. Writers and poets read from their works, or participated in "conversations". I particularly enjoyed Roger MacDonald (who read from his wonderful book *The Tree in Changing Light*), the recollections of her childhood in rural Victoria by Watermark Literary Fellow Carolyn Leach-Paholski and John Blay's story of his bushwalking adventures. I also enjoyed Anthony Lawrence's poems - I found I could actually understand what he was saying, unlike the work of most modern poets, which I find totally opaque. There was a forum on bushfires at which Tom Griffiths presented a brilliant essay on the 2009 Victorian bushfires, and Bill Gammage introduced the audience to the notion of the pre-settlement Australian landscape as being manufactured by Aboriginal people, rather than an untrammelled natural wilderness. Gammage's concepts (with which I generally agree) were supported by an interesting presentation from admired archaeologist and Forest History Society member Sue Feary.

The American nature writer John Daniel was the Festival's invited overseas visitor. I found his work witty and insightful. It was a pity that he did not get more time, as he had something to say, as well as a way of saying it ... but the program was designed to hear many voices, which is how it should be.

There were two special highlights for me. The first was a photographic display by the gifted Sydney photographer Peter Solness. Peter has developed a highly innovative technique for photographing trees and bushland at night,

and the images are quite startling. They brought to my mind many a night camping in the bush under a full moon. The second were the presentations by luthiers and musicians Graham Caldersmith, Doug Eaton and Dale Jacobson, who use Australian and exotic timbers to make musical instruments. Their stringed instruments were superb and their concert lively and tuneful.

Two presentations focussed on environmental issues, familiar polemics on "saving the forests" and the plight of Tasmanians disadvantaged by the timber industry. I disagreed with nearly everything here, and tried to provide an alternative perspective. However, as many members of this newsletter will know, it is not easy being the only forester in a room full of people who think Australia is just about down to its last tree due to evil loggers and foresters! I found the general antagonism to the timber industry ironic, as we were sitting in a superb timber hall, surrounded by lovely regrowth forest which had arisen in the wake of logging, and were all people who use paper, made from woodchips, as our tools in trade. Ah well.

Roger Underwood



Is Roger really listening? Obviously Jane is not! Watermark 2009, Kendall.
Photo: Jan Gammage.

THE MUSTER - A PERSPECTIVE FROM JANE LENNON

This year's Watermark literary muster at the historic Kendall School of Arts had the theme *The Nature and Place of Wood*, and proved to be a rich feast of both forest lyricism and forest history lovers. A new format and time saw the muster packed into four days.

Opening with a dedication to Eric Rolls, Tom Griffiths reminded us that Eric had celebrated wildness, establishing that disturbed nature is valuable not lesser, while Pete Hay thought that Eric's broad range of imaginative writing had ploughed a furrow so that the last decade of Australian nature writing had produced a distinctively Australian mode. In the first session, "Touching Wood", Elizabeth Webby put Eric in the context of great Australian writers but went onto declare Lawson's *The Splitters* as her favourite poem. Ashley Hay of Gum fame reminded us that despite "hanging out with dead foresters and botanists", we do not have "Eucalyptus

dreaming" yet, while Bill Gammage noted that Alfred Howitt's 1890 paper on East Gippsland's "annual fires" was a century ahead of its time. All speakers decried the loss of local knowledge. In "Diversifolia" John Blay spoke of the south east forests of NSW, while American visitor John Daniels described the woods and mountains of Oregon and Roger McDonald held us spellbound with his local Braidwood trees.

I then chaired a lively forum on fire with Tom Griffiths reminding us of Royal Commissioner Judge Leonard Stretton's findings about the 1939 Black Friday fires - and that despite 70 years of scientific research and ecological understanding, "we still have not lived long enough". Roger Underwood outlined the confused science, confused objectives whereby people know what they are against but not what they are for. He argued for a regular burning regime to produce a mosaic of biodiverse areas; he also decried the use of military language in describing fire suppression and wanted a better word than "retreat" - just as I want Aussie "dugouts", not military "bunkers"! Finally all agreed that rather than treating bushfires as emergencies, they are part of regular land management in this dry continent where nature can overwhelm the best of human endeavours.

Nicholas Rothwell believes that we used colonising language to write about the bush until recently and our vague descriptions have effected politics; we need a vocabulary performed, being in the landscape, turning from the aggressive recolonisation of verbal and mental space as in north Australia. We must use words of precision and passion -as he certainly did describing the extraordinary hybridisation of northern forests and in particular, the northern stringybark response to termites. Mark Tredinnick continued this theme with a plea for finding a vernacular language for Australian landscapes as he had in his recent landscape memoir, *The Blue Plateau*, giving a place, a voice.

Bob Beale, author of *If Trees Could Speak*, described his first contact with Aborigines as kids in the Sydney suburban bush. He decried the fiction of wilderness as Australia is a human "construct" charged with spirituality and needing respect, while John Blay talked about the need to go into the bush to rediscover oneself without taking this out on others. Caroline Leach-Paholski presented work in progress on Tasmania where "geography was a conspiracy" and a beautiful poem *Sorrow Bird*. Later in the session, "Putting Down Roots", Caroline read a beautiful new essay about her father coming to a patch of forest 60kms east of Melbourne after the war, a tabula rasa calling out to be inscribed by him, and so it was turned into a farm.

The "Driftwood" session commenced with Roger Underwood talking about favourite trees and offering a west of the continent approach to the easterners, then Elizabeth Webby told how the *Colonial Gazette* in 1832 prophesied that in 200 years, one quarter of the population would live in Sydney and there would be no Australian trees left as English trees would replace them. Despite this the *Sydney Gazette* in 1831 had published a

poem about gum trees at Coogee, and then Charles Harpur's poetry came into vogue, although Marcus Clarke's forests in the 1870s were all "grey and glum". Expatriate Rosa Praed described eucalypts around Cannes in 1903 and sickly ones on the Campagna in Italy, but after World War I the taint of melancholy in forest description was gone. Sue Feary described the forests of Cape York and their use by Aboriginal people from mission times, through World War II to today and their development of both small mills to build social capital and arts and crafts.

Anthony Lawrence's evocative poems from *Bark* covered deep dreaming as well as everyday events. He also described the impact of American poet, Charles Wright on landscape and in doing so referred to a trawler with "gulls like sunbleached prayer flags" - so evocative. Poetry is a secret best shared and Mark Tredinnick discussed the deep understanding of pain through poetry, as well as poetry as sculpture with sound, hence "Canberra ... glib in her sacred geometry".

The young writers session was titled "Saplings" - a nice break from old growth as Roger Underwood commented! Sharon Dean presented a fabulous brief tour of Australian haiku poetry, *As the Crow Flies*. Steven Ross reflected on the relationship between Indigenous oral history and the written record causing the loss of a Native Title case, yet the written words are "our friends" in that linguists like Louise Hercus have recorded Indigenous dictionaries and now this is enabling connection to country.

The session "Wildwood" began with a tribute to Roger Deakin, a former Watermark contributor and late English novelist. John Daniel, "the Winter Creek Disclaimer", wittily described his Australian experiences especially in the rainforest around Maleny where everything wants to grow and climb, the irresponsible biota with local natural disorder (leeches), forests of potted houseplants gone wild. Roger McDonald powerfully described trees in Aboriginal lives and connection to country and the difficulty in finding the right words - "shaken like a tree"; he illustrated this with readings from his beautiful book, *The Tree in Changing Light*, including the story of Rosie the Maori worker on a sheep station.

The final forum, "Wooden It Be Lovely?" was chaired by John Taylor who introduced the writer Michael Pollan's dilemma of using a beautiful old growth tree in constructing his writing room in the woods. Roger Underwood then described his career in forestry from the steam age to the electronic age and shared his love of the axe, a tool skilled since antiquity. John Blay talked about logging with great discretion so that the potoroo would not be disadvantaged and how G.A. Robinson described more frequent burning to keep the Bundian Way open and clean so that the passage became roads without maps and around the swamps, yamfields and orchids remain because of the digging stick. Blay urged us to see Australia as a collection of indigenous nations' bioregions and use the local knowledge to maintain these mosaics.

Heavy rain for the entire time of the muster forced the cancellation of excursions to the Comboyne Plateau and

therefore many more personal conversations ensued and an innovative "tour" of the trees in Peter Solness's photographs which decorated the walls of the hall. Peter Levitzke, the Forests NSW Harvesting Officer gave a talk on the local forests instead of a tour: the annual burning by Birpai had been very cool and now rainforest in the gullies was expanding due to lack of burning. Kendall forests were largely regrowth, fifty years since the last cut immediately after World War II. He described modern coupe selection and planning procedures for logging. In 1999 seven mills were closed to ensure sustainable yields and of the more than one million hectares of forest on the north coast, 350,000 ha of productive forest remain, with Herrons Creek, the largest hardwood mill in the southern hemisphere, producing 105,000 cubic metres of structural timber and flooring.

It was a wonderful event, a great celebration of words, ideas, images and love of wood, trees, forests, and wooden musical instruments. Listening, sharing conversations, inspired by our vegetation and its influence on our culture ... more please!

Jane Lennon



Membership of the Australian Forest History Society (AFHS) Inc is \$25 a year, or \$15 a year for students and for overseas addresses is \$30 (**in Australian currency please**). These prices do not include GST as the AFHS is not registered for paying or claiming GST. Membership expires on 30th June each year. Payment can be made by cheque or money order, or through Electronic Funds Transfer. Cheques or Money Orders 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 062-911
Account No.: 1010 1753

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

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	Please mark the box if you would like a receipt - otherwise an acknowledgment will be sent by e-mail.
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AFHS 2010 CONFERENCE UPDATE

Plans are unfolding for the eighth Australian Forest History Society conference, to be held in Lismore NSW, in June 2010. The venue will be Invercauld House, which is Southern Cross University's Lismore conference centre, where comfortable, economic and convenient motel-style accommodation is also available. The conference will commence on Tuesday morning 8th June and conclude on Friday afternoon 11th June. The four days will include field, industry and museum visits as well as the paper sessions.

The conference will be followed by a three day (and two night) study tour of forest areas in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland, departing by coach from Invercauld House on Saturday morning 12th June, and returning to Lismore on Monday afternoon 14th June.

Please let us know soon if you wish to offer a paper, or just attend. Registering your interest early will ensure that further details are sent to you as and when they become available. Expression of Interest forms can be downloaded from www.foresthistory.org.au.

Remember, although papers on all aspects of forest history are welcome, we will be especially interested in any which deal with the history of rainforests and rainforest timbers, and with the history of landscape-scale forest transitions. At least three such transitions are clearly evident in the Lismore district: from rainforest to dairy pasture (nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), from dairy pasture to extensive horticulture (late twentieth century), and from dairy pasture to plantation forestry (early twenty-first century), so it is hoped that this general theme will also be reflected in the conference program.

Brett Stubbs

AFHS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS DIGITISED AND ON-LINE

In another stage of the history of close collaboration between the Australian Forest History Society and the Australian National University, the proceedings of six of our forest history conferences have now been digitised and are freely available to anyone with an internet connection. They can be found at: http://fennerschool.anu.edu.au/publications/books/forest_history_series.php.

The proceedings of our first conference in 1988 were published by the Department of Geography and Oceanography, Australian Defence Force Academy and have been reproduced and digitally published here with the permission of ADFA by courtesy of Professor Brian Lees. The other proceedings were published by Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, now the Fenner School of Environment and Society, The Australian National University. We are most grateful to Professor Steve Dovers for funding the digitisation process and to Debbie Claridge for preparing the digital files for web publication. The file for each book takes a few minutes to download, depending on the speed of your broadband

internet connection. Each book has a search facility. Debbie Claridge and John Dargavel are investigating the possibility of dividing each book into separate files for each chapter and would be glad to hear the views of readers.

The proceedings available and the size of each file are:

Australia's ever-changing forests: Proceedings of the First National Conference on Australian Forest History, Edited by Kevin J. Frawley and Noel M. Semple, 1988 (PDF, 21.5MB).

Australia's ever-changing forests II: Proceedings of the Second National Conference on Australian Forest History, Edited by John Dargavel and Sue Feary, 1993 (PDF, 16.8MB).

Australia's ever-changing forests III: Proceedings of the Third National Conference on Australian Forest History, Edited by John Dargavel, 1997 (PDF, 18.9MB).

Australia's ever-changing forests IV: Proceedings of the Fourth National Conference on Australian Forest History, Edited by John Dargavel and Brenda Libbis, 1999 (PDF, 18.7MB).

Perfumed pineries: Environmental history of Australia's Callitris forests, Edited by John Dargavel, Diane Hart and Brenda Libbis, 2001 (PDF, 9.8MB).

Australia's ever-changing forests V: Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference on Australian Forest History, Edited by John Dargavel, Denise Gaughwin and Brenda Libbis, 2002 (PDF, 17.7MB).

The digitisation was carried out by CAVAL which is an Australian not-for-profit company established to provide library services to libraries in Australia, New Zealand and Asia and set up in Melbourne by a group of universities. (see www.caval.edu.au). It used a Kirtas book scanner that turns the pages automatically (see photo).



Kirtas 2400 RA Book Scanner

John Dargavel

John.Dargavel@ozemail.com.au

FIGHTING FORESTER - LIEUTENANT GEOFFREY JAMES RODGER

I am undertaking some research on a soldier who served in the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery in the First World War. One of the officers of the same unit was Lieutenant Geoffrey James Rodger, whom I understand eventually became Director-General of the Forestry and Timber Bureau. I hope that we may be able to assist each other.

I have obtained a copy of a photograph of the officers of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery taken on 10th October 1918 and I am sure that Lieutenant Rodger is in the group. I hope that one of your readers might be able to identify him in the photograph, to see if their identification matches mine.

Also, can anyone help me with biographical material about Lieutenant Rodger after his return from the war? I am able to provide some information about his involvement in the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery if your group would like it.

Terry Doherty

do3rty_323@bigpond.com



Spot the forester: Can anyone recognise Geoffrey James Rodger in this 1918 photograph of officers of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery?

Ed's note: The following has been gleaned by Brett Stubbs from Les Carron's A History of Forestry in Australia. It partly answers Terry's inquiry.

G.J. Rodger was one of the early graduates of the Adelaide University Forestry School. In 1925, the Federal Capital Commission created a Forestry Branch, with Rodger as Chief Forester, to plan and implement an industrial forestry program in the Federal Capital Territory.

In 1927-28, when Chief Forester of the Federal Capital Territory, Rodger carried out a survey and report on the forest resources of Tasmania. His terms of reference were to examine and report upon the economic position of the sawmilling industry, the possibility of establishing economic plantations of softwoods, measures necessary to assess the hardwood resources and the possibility of their regeneration, and the reorganisation of the forestry department to enable these things to be carried into effect. Rodger recommended and detailed a program of coniferous afforestation.

Rodger took over as Conservator of the South Australian Woods and Forests Department in June 1935. He had been in this new position for only a few weeks when a Royal Commission was appointed in July 1935 to inquire into afforestation in South Australia, and he was immediately drawn into assisting with the investigations.

After the entry of Japan and the USA into the Second World War, the demand for wood by the fighting services and for home defence rapidly overtook industry's capacity to supply it. Increases in staff in the Commonwealth's Timber Control head office became necessary, and Deputy Controllers were appointed for New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and Liaison Officers (converted to Deputy Controllers in 1943) in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Rodger was the Liaison Officer, later Deputy Controller, for South Australia.

After the war, the Commonwealth Government altered the title of its Forestry Bureau to Forestry and Timber Bureau, placed the administration of the reconstituted entity under a Director-General instead of an Inspector-General, and extended its powers and functions. The Act which brought about these changes came into effect from 12th September 1946. In anticipation, Rodger, the Conservator in South Australia, was appointed Director-General on 1st April 1946. He also acted as Commonwealth Controller of Timber from May until December 1946 when the National Security (Timber Control) Regulations, under which the control operated, lapsed.

In March 1951, the Western Australian Government appointed Rodger, still Director-General of the Commonwealth Forestry and Timber Bureau, as Royal Commissioner to inquire into all phases of forestry, the timber industry and the timber trade in that State. He submitted his comprehensive report in December 1951.

Rodger was succeeded as Director-General in December 1959 by M.R. Jacobs. A year later, during the hot, dry summer of 1960-61, the south-western part of Western Australia was devastated by bushfires. A Royal Commission was established in April 1961 to inquire into these bushfires, and Rodger was appointed as Royal Commissioner.





WILLIAM PETER LEONARD

I'm researching some aspects of the history of sawmilling in Australia and New Zealand, as part of a book I'm compiling for a family history project.

My grandfather worked in the sawmilling industry in Canada, Australia and New Zealand after emigrating from Canada as a young man. He was, according to my father's sister, an engineer who worked in mills in Australia (and New Zealand), first as saw expert and saw doctor and then as a mill manager.

His father may have worked in the lumber industry in Ontario, Canada where I believe my grandfather acquired his initial training.

The details I have are scant so far with a rough timeline below. I'm looking for any information that will help fill gaps as well as photographs from the mills/regions he worked in and general background information or documents relating to the industry at the time.

William Peter Leonard, born 1888, Warton, Ontario.
c1908-1912 - he arrived in New Zealand to work in the timber industry possibly in the North Island around the Auckland area where he met his future wife.

c1912 - he moved to Western Australia for a job there. My grandmother followed and they were married in Fremantle in 1913. My father was born in 1914 in Yarloop which leads to the assumption my grandfather was working in mills in that region at least until 1920.

Sometime between 1920 and 1928 they moved back to New Zealand where he continued to work in the same industry. In 1928 they moved back to Australia - Boonah where he worked in a mill until approximately 1936/37.

c1937-1940/42 - they moved to a mill near Townsville. They lived on Stanton Hill. The mill produced boxes for transporting rifles for the war effort according to his daughter.

1942-April 1944 - moved to a mill at Briggsvale, Dorrigo Line, NSW.

Reference to Grafton in 1944 - no other information.

1947-1950. Managed a mill in Beaudesert, Qld.

c1950-1955 - managed a mill around Mudgeree, Qld.

The only mill name I have been unable to confirm is that of Rosenfeld and Sons. He worked for them sometime between 1928 and c1939/1940.

Thank you

Amalijah Thompson

PO Box 1070
WODEN ACT 2505

Tel (w): (02) 6125 0147

Tel (ah): (02) 6232 4997

Email: amalijah@grapevine.net.au

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH COAST NSW TIMBER INDUSTRY

I've recently started work on researching a history of the south coast NSW timber industry (and forestry) and I would welcome any information on early sawmilling developments in the region, particularly McMillans and the Clyde Sawmilling Company, Goodlet and Smith (Redhead, Bawley Point), Molloy's and Allen Taylor's early days. I am interested in the families that have worked in the industry over the years (of which my family is one), and how economic and industry developments have shaped the industry and the lives of those families.

I am also, as one element of the broader project, researching the history of the Wandandian sawmill, south of Nowra, which has been in continuous operation since at least around 1900. It was owned for some years by Watt & Mathie, and then by William Watt & Sons. (To declare my interest, it is now owned by my family, and I live in the original manager's residence.) Sawn timber was taken out by drogher, the *Advance* and the *Ruakaka*, to Sussex Inlet for shipping to Wollongong or Sydney. I would welcome any information about this mill and the people who have worked and lived here over the years.

Thank you very much.

Leith Davis

D2591 Princes Highway
WANDANDIAN NSW 2540

Tel: (02) 4443 6747

Mob: 0421 001 685

Email: leithd@westnet.com.au

STUDENT PRIZE FOR THE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE OR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY 2010

The National Museum of Australia and the Australian Academy of Science are inviting submissions for the 2010 Student Prize for the History of Australian Science or Environmental History. The Prize will be a certificate and \$2500 and will be awarded for original unpublished research undertaken while enrolled as a student (postgraduate or undergraduate) at any tertiary educational institution in the world.

Essays may deal with any aspect of the History of Australian Science (including medicine and technology) or Australian Environmental History. "Australia" in this case can include essays that focus on the Australian region, broadly defined, including Oceania. Essays that compare issues and subjects associated with Australia with those of other places are also welcomed. The winning entry, if it is in a suitable subject area, may be considered for publication in *Historical Records of Australian Science*.

Inquiries - including on formatting and other submission requirements - should be directed to rosanne.walker@science.org.au. The closing date for submissions is Sunday 28 February 2010.

VALE PETER MCKELVEY (1926-2009)

The distinguished New Zealand forester Emeritus Professor Peter McKelvey recently died in Christchurch at the age of 82. Joining the New Zealand Forest Service in 1945 he completed a part time BSci in 1949 before proceeding to a forestry degree at the University of Edinburgh in 1951. McKelvey was part of generation of New Zealand foresters who benefitted from Director of Forests, Alex Entrican's strategy, in the absence of a New Zealand forestry school, of having selected staff complete a BSci in New Zealand and then undertake professional studies overseas with Canberra, Edinburgh and Oxford, being the main destinations.

On returning to New Zealand McKelvey joined the National Forest Survey. This was a major Forest Service undertaking, replacing the National Forest Inventory of 1921-23 which though superior to earlier Lands Department timber supply estimates was recognised as still being inadequate. The National Forest Survey continued for a decade with McKelvey overseeing the final stages of its work and publishing important research on the *Synecology of the West Taupo indigenous forests* (McKelvey, 1963) as well as co-authoring the summary volume of the survey (Masters et al., 1957).

Subsequently he remained at the Forest Research Institute in Rotorua before taking the position of Conservator of Forests for Wellington Conservancy. It was from here in 1966 that he was appointed as the foundation Professor of Forestry of the newly re-established Forestry School at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. Two under resourced forestry schools had been set up at Auckland and Canterbury in the 1920s. Both succumbed to Depression-related retrenchment. The Canterbury school survived longer, closing in 1934. Auckland and Canterbury University Colleges both lobbied for a re-established school from the 1940s and the scene was further complicated by Entrican pressing for a post-graduate teaching and research facility linked to the Forest Research Institute in Rotorua adjacent to the large state exotic plantations. This impasse was not really broken until A.L. Poole, became Director General of Forestry in 1961. Canterbury was successful in securing the school.

McKelvey was able to spend an extended period of time overseas looking at various forestry education models in order to construct a curriculum fitted to local requirements and to move into a purpose designed building. The first intake of students was in 1970. As that decade unfolded the future of indigenous forests became highly contested with distinct "battle lines" being drawn between the New Zealand Forest Service and environmental groups such as the Native Forests Action Council. During this time McKelvey addressed the question of forest conservation and it is probably time to critically review some of his assessments. He also chaired a key working party of environmental groups and government representatives that devised a revised indigenous forest policy in the mid 1970s. In the early 1980s he undertook the difficult task of offering an

informed commentary on the McLean Report which reviewed the objectives, functions and responsibilities of the New Zealand Forest Service and of the Service's rebuttal (McKelvey, 1981). Ultimately the New Zealand Forest Service was disestablished in 1987 to be replaced by three separate single purpose organisations.

McKelvey remained as Dean of Forestry until his retirement in 1985 when he became Emeritus Professor. While Dean he continued research into animal control in indigenous forests. He served in various capacities in the New Zealand Institute of Forestry including being President (1972-74) being awarded its highest honours and in 2004 was awarded an honorary DSci by Canterbury University.

After retiring from the University McKelvey carved another niche for himself as a writer on aspects of New Zealand's forest history drawing on his wide ranging professional and personal experience of forests and forestry in New Zealand. Having gently (and quite accurately) chided me for under playing the place of protection forestry in my own history of New Zealand forestry he produced an authoritative statement in 1995 titled *Steepland Forests*. This was followed by a detailed historical and study of forest planting on sand country (1999).

In addition he published a number of biographical pieces in *New Zealand Forestry* on early forester Thomas Kirk (McKelvey, 1991), on the impact of French forestry practices on Canadian forester, Leon McIntosh Ellis the first Director of Forests in New Zealand (1920-28) (McKelvey, 1989), and on pioneer Canterbury tree planter and forestry school benefactor T.W. Adams (McKelvey, 1991). He subsequently extended his scope to write an extended essay on Adams for the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (McKelvey, 2007). In all, he penned three other entries for forest scientists N.L. Elder and J.T. Holloway and Major Yerex who was in charge of the deer control programme.

Other papers included an overview of the background to the foundation of the school and its early years (McKelvey, 1984, 1991) and a detailed study of the WWII New Zealand forestry companies (McKelvey, 2001). He also wrote an historical account of his own 1970s forestry research in Samoa (McKelvey, 2002).

In the oration for his DSci Professor Roger Sands aptly described Peter McKelvey as "an eminent ecologist, educationalist, forest historian and manager in the field for forestry in New Zealand".

Michael Roche

Ed's note: a select bibliography of Peter McKelvey's publications will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



VALE ROBERT BODEN (1935-2009)

Readers will be saddened to learn of the passing of Society member Robert Boden on 30th August 2009. The ACT Deputy Chief Minister, Ms Katy Gallagher, moved a condolence motion in the ACT Legislative Assembly on 15th September 2009. The opening text appears below and the full condolence motion is available at www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2009/pdfs/20090915.pdf.

"(The ACT Legislative) Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of Dr Robert Boden OAM, former Director of the Australian National Botanic Gardens, a life dedicated to trees and the amenity of horticulture, and tenders its profound sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement. For more than half a century, Dr Robert Boden dedicated himself to the study and protection of trees. His legacy is evident everywhere we look around us in the national capital, in any direction. And his legacy will endure, long after this generation of our urban forest has gone, in the form of his pioneering work on the conservation of threatened species. Dr Robert Boden's death late last month has deprived our community of a champion of the natural environment and an inheritor of the scientific and horticultural tradition begun in this territory by figures such as Weston and Pryor. On behalf of the ACT government, I convey my condolences to his wife, Susan Parsons, his former wife, Anne McDonald, his children, David and Susan, and their families."

VALE ERIC PETER BACHELARD

Eric Bachelard was Professor of Forestry in the Forestry Department at the Australian National University and a Fellow of the Institute of Foresters of Australia. The following notice appeared in the *Canberra Times* -

"ERIC PETER BACHELARD BSc (For), MF (Yale), PhD (Yale), Professor (Emeritus), ANU Loving husband of Sally. Father and father-in-law of Sarah, Michael and Sally, Andrew and Victoria and grandfather of Alex, Hannah, Campbell and Hazel. Died peacefully on Monday September 14, 2009 after a long illness. A loyal, brave and loving man."

His funeral service was held at All Saints Anglican Church in Ainslie on 21st September 2009.

AUSTRALIAN GARDENS AND LANDSCAPES

AFHS members were among the speakers at one day symposium on Australian Gardens and Landscapes held at Latrobe University on Friday 9th October 2009. The keynote address was given by Professor Tom Griffiths who spoke on "Black Saturday in historical perspective - fire, memory and environmental history". Other speakers included James Beattie, Richard Broome, Duncan Campbell, Charles Fahey, Ruth Ford, Bill Gammage, Katie Holmes, Kylie Mirmohamadi.

Enquiries should be directed to history@latrobe.edu.au.



NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2008-2009

5:30PM, Wednesday 18th November 2009

Room 2, Forestry Building, Linnaeus Way, Australian National University

Agenda

- 1) Apologies.
- 2) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 25 November 2008.
- 3) Matters arising from the Minutes not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.
- 4) President's report.
- 5) Audited financial report for the year to 30th June 2009 (Treasurer).
- 6) Set amount of annual subscription.
- 7) Election of Office Bearers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary) and up to five Committee Members.
- 8) Nomination of Public Officer (who may be an Office Bearer or Committee Member).
- 9) Appointment of Auditor for 2009-10 (who may not be an Office Bearer or Committee Member).
- 10) Any other business for which notice has been given.
- 11) Update on Newsletter production (Sue Feary).
- 12) AFHS conference 2010 (Brett Stubbs).

Notes

The present Committee consists of Brett Stubbs (President), Jane Lennon (Vice-President), Kevin Frawley (Secretary), Fintán Ó Laighin (Treasurer), Paul Star, Stephen Legg, Tessa Bird, Sue Feary, Peter Davies. Nominations for Committee positions are called for and a nomination form has been sent to current members. Committee members must be financial members of the AFHS.

The Public Officer is Juliana Lazzari.

Members unable to attend the AGM may appoint a proxy.

Dinner: After the AGM, members (and partners and friends) are invited to gather at a restaurant (to be determined).

