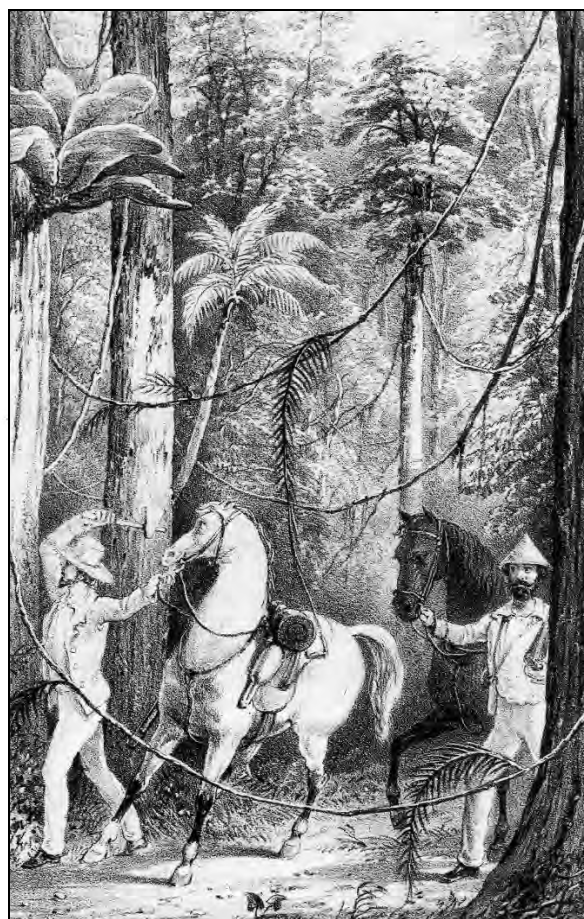

AUSTRALIAN

Forest History

SOCIETY Inc.

Newsletter No. 54
January 2010

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

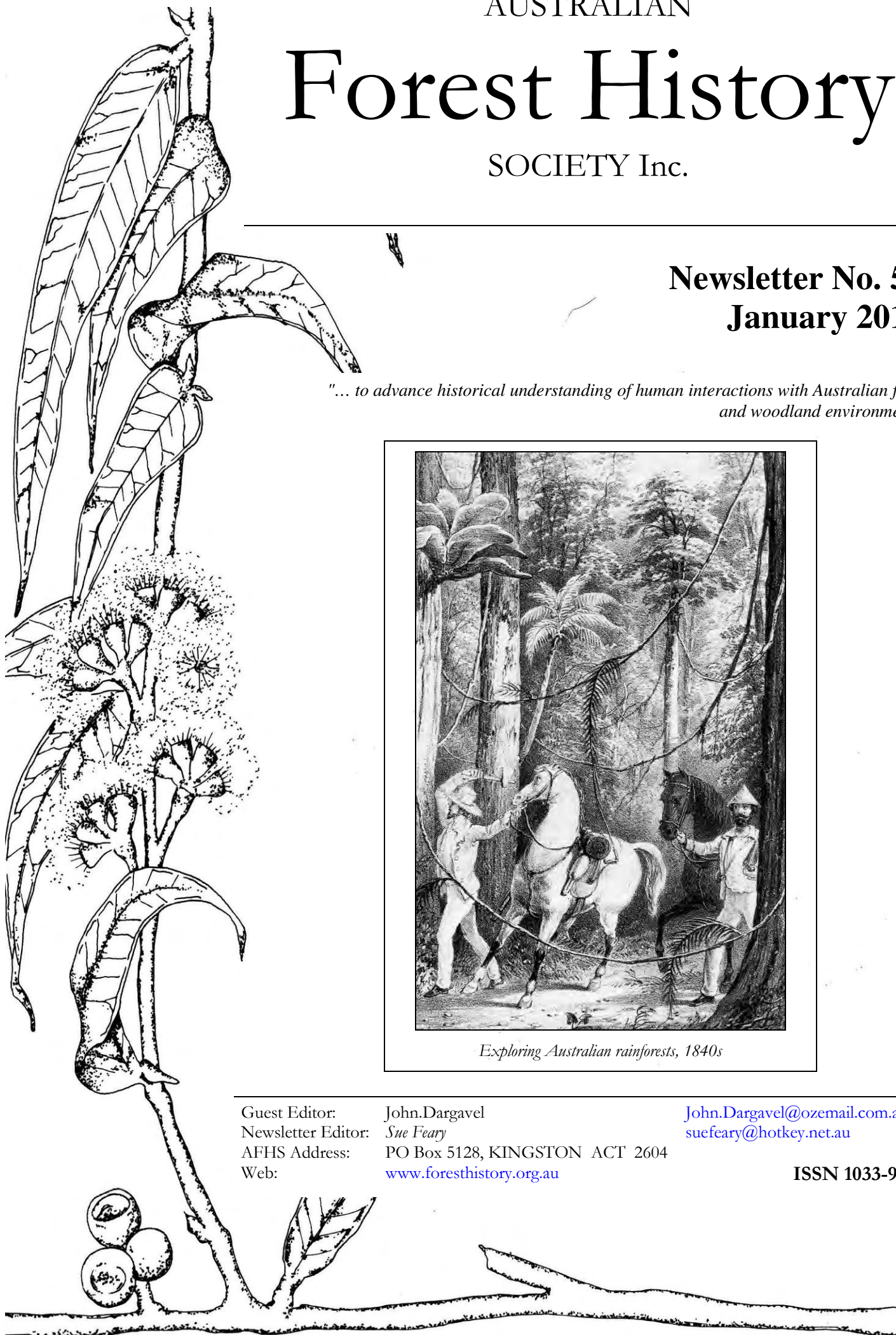


Exploring Australian rainforests, 1840s

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THE YEAR PAST AND THE YEAR FUTURE

In this issue, we look back at the events of 2009, including the recent Annual General Meeting of the Society, and forwards to our conference in 2010. We have two reports on the first World Congress on Environmental History, we have a book review, news of members and publication notices. We also have an article on the sandalwood industry in South Australia from 1925 to 1940.

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR TO 30 JUNE 2009

The Society's activities during the financial year 2008-09 mainly concerned (i) the finalisation of matters associated with the last conference in 2007; (ii) planning for the next conference in 2010; (iii) the scanning and publication in digital form of the volumes of proceedings of past conferences; (iv) the regular activity of newsletter publication; (v) the continued development and maintenance of the Society's website; and (vi) general administration.

1. New Zealand Conference, Christchurch, 29 January-2 February 2007

The Trans-Tasman Forest History Conference, the society's seventh conference, was held in New Zealand in January and February 2007. The final output from that conference was a special edition of the journal *Environment and History* containing a selection of papers from the conference. This publication appeared in November 2008, during the year being reported here. As this was detailed in my last annual report, I will say no more about it here.

2. Lismore Conference, June 2010

The finalisation of the seventh AFHS conference has overlapped considerably with preparations for the eighth, despite the three-and-a-half years between them. The organising committee for the eighth conference (Jane Lennon, John Taylor, Alison Specht, and I) has continued to make arrangements for this event, to be held in Lismore, northern NSW, in June 2010. Dates for the event have been refined since my last report. The conference sessions will begin on Tuesday 8 June, but with registration from the preceding afternoon, possibly accompanied by an afternoon/evening social function. Accommodation will be available at the conference venue from the evening of Monday 7 June. A study tour in north-eastern NSW and south-eastern Queensland will begin on Saturday morning 12 June, returning to Lismore in the afternoon of Monday 14 June. Further developments will be publicised on the Society's website.

3. Digitisation of Conference Proceedings

Following the successful digitisation of the Society's newsletter archive in early 2007, the much more ambitious digitisation of most of the Society's conference publications was undertaken during 2008-09. This was

done with the generous assistance of the Australian National University. Six volumes of proceedings were scanned, and these are now freely available in pdf format from the website of the ANU's Fenner School of Environment and Society (see http://fennerschool.anu.edu.au/publications/books/forest_history_series.php). Details of the project were published in the Society's October 2009 newsletter. The efforts of John Dargavel in initiating and managing this project are acknowledged.

4. Newsletter Publication

The system of having Guest Editors prepare newsletters, under the overall guidance and co-ordination of a "Series Editor", has been continued in theory. In practice, however, the difficulty of recruiting Guest Editors has resulted in Series Editor Sue Feary undertaking much more than just a co-ordinating role. Three newsletters were published during the financial year (September 2008 - Sue Feary; January 2009 - Fintán Ó Laighin; and May 2009 - Peter Evans). The September 2008 edition, notably, was the Society's fiftieth newsletter. It was used to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the inauguration of the Society, and contains a collection of articles by individuals who were all closely associated with the event being celebrated.

Since the end of the financial year, Sue Feary also compiled the October 2009 newsletter. Clearly, the Guest Editor system is not working as well as it might, and I take this opportunity to reiterate Sue's regular plea for volunteers to compile future newsletters.

5. Society Website

The Society's website (www.foresthistory.org.au) was established and became active in June 2006 to facilitate organisation of the Christchurch conference, but its role has now become much wider. For example, it is now the repository for digital copies of all of the Society's newsletters, and has links to the digital versions of the proceedings of past conferences. I acknowledge the continued work of our webmaster, Michael Goasdoue, in maintaining the site.

Usage of the website has increased steadily and very satisfactorily since June 2006, as the following statistics will indicate. During the first two months of operation, June and July 2006, the site had 75 and 94 visitors respectively. From this modest beginning, visitation rates grew to 167 visitors/month in December 2006, to 250 in December 2007, to 308 in December 2008, to 502 in October 2009, the latest full month. The record month was March 2009, when 611 unique visitors were recorded. Altogether, since June 2006 to the present time more than 17,000 visits to the site have been recorded. Taking the most recent full month in detail, about 40 percent of activity on the site during October 2009 was by Australian users, and about 20 percent originated in each of the USA and New Zealand. New Zealand usage is quite variable, but Australia and USA, in that order, are now typically the two largest sources of activity.



6. Administration

The successful continuation of the Society is, as always, due to the work of many people. Some particular contributions have already been acknowledged, but in addition it must be recognised that much of the more mundane general administration of the Society is undertaken by Treasurer, Fintán Ó Laighin, and Secretary, Kevin Frawley. Their efforts in these roles are greatly valued.

Brett Stubbs

TREASURER'S REPORT

Audited financial accounts for the 2008-09 financial year were presented to the AGM. The financial position of the Society remains strong, although there had been a decline in membership during the year. The previous system of sending reminders to people will be reinstated, rather than relying on members to remember that memberships expire on 30 June each year.

It was recommended that the new committee consider activities which could be funded during the year, such as production of a third issue in the series of *Australia and New Zealand Forest Histories*. The two issues in the series had both been published in 2005-06.

Mr Stephen Bailey was thanked and acknowledged for agreeing to be the Society's auditor on a voluntary basis. He has audited our accounts since 2003-04 and his contribution to the Society is very much appreciated.

The meeting agreed that current annual subscription of \$25 (Australia) / \$15 student / \$30 (overseas) should be maintained.

Fintán Ó Laighin

OUR NEW COMMITTEE

At the AGM, the following people were elected for 2009-10:

President	Brett Stubbs
Vice-President	Jane Lennon
Secretary	Kevin Frawley
Treasurer	Fintán Ó Laighin
Committee	Peter Davies, Sue Feary, Stephen Legg, Juliana Lazzari

John Dargavel was co-opted to be an advisor to the AFHS in the ACT.

Juliana Lazzari (ACT) was appointed Public Officer.

Sue Feary is to continue as editor with Guest Editors: John Dargavel (January); Jane Lennon (May); Stephen Legg and Peter Davies (September).

AFHS 2010 CONFERENCE UPDATE

As mentioned in the October 2009 issue (no. 53), 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 8 June and conclude on Friday afternoon 11 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 12 June, and returning to Lismore on Monday afternoon 14 June.

The back page of this newsletter includes further information on the conference, including info on accommodation and the post-conference field trip.

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.

Brett Stubbs

CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIP

The Australian Forest History Society is offering one scholarship to an enrolled tertiary student to attend our 8th National Conference on Australian Forest History to be held in Lismore, NSW, from Tuesday 8 to Friday 11 June 2010. The scholarship provides the full cost of conference registration, accommodation at the conference venue and up to \$500 in travel expenses. For more information, see www.foresthistory.org.au.

Applicants should submit their C.V. and a one page abstract of a proposed paper dealing with any aspect of "historical understanding of human interactions with Australian and New Zealand forest and woodland environments" to the President, Dr Brett Stubbs, by **15 March 2010**. For further information contact either:

Brett Stubbs
 Tel: (02) 6620 3650
 E-mail: bstubbs@scu.edu.au or

John Dargavel
 Tel: (02) 6258 9102
 E-mail: John.Dargavel@anu.edu.au.



A YEAR'S GOOD READING

We get to the season of goodwill at the end of the year and can think of all the best things we have read. There have been many books and articles to choose from, and some of the Committee members have picked their two favourites for the year, listed later. First we can rejoice that the three main environmental history journals have continued to publish many interesting papers, a number of which have specifically concerned forests and others which have opened wider perspectives for us.

Recent Journals

Global Environment is now well and truly on the scene with its third issue out, and doubtless the fourth is wending its way through the international snail mail. Being published only twice a year, the issues are more like books than journals. Issue three comes in at 282 pages. Greg Bankoff, who members will recall from our New Zealand conference, has an article on a year in the life of a forester in the Spanish Philippines. Other articles of forest interest include one on China, and another on the history of carbon emissions from Finland that shows how they have changed from the wood economy of the nineteenth century to the present. A paper on tigers, mentioned later, is one of my personal favourites.

Environment and History completed its fifteenth year and now publishes four issues a year. It often carries Australian and New Zealand papers, and carried a special issue in 2008 with papers from our conference. In 2009 another take on the history of the Australian Forestry School was provided by Brett Bennett, an American PhD scholar whom we hope to see more of in the coming year. I enjoyed a paper by Jodi Frawley on the influence of the Sydney Botanic Gardens and its Director, Joseph Maiden, on the planting of street trees.

Environmental History completed its fourteenth year of publication. It publishes four issues a year and carries many American papers. I found an overview paper on Latin American environmental history by Mark Carey had many ideas that could well be applied to the Australian situation. Another paper that looked at the way we write environmental history was provided by Paul Sutter who contrasted U.S. environmental history with a strand of Indian environmental history that focused on peasant action. The great strength of this journal for me lies in the thirty-page book review section in each issue.

John Dargavel

Committee Favourites

John Dargavel: I couldn't pick only two, so I have listed my three favourites for the year. Joachim Radkau's *Nature and Power: a Global History of the Environment* (translated by Thomas Dunlap, Cambridge University Press, 2008) is a large book in conception and one that is rich in detail. Some people might find it verbose, but I read it a bit at a time in several weeks, mostly in waiting rooms. It is a serious book and I found that having to concentrate hard

made the time fly. It has many insights into forest and water history and the connections between them and I found it full of stimulating ideas.

I was asked to review Thaddeus Sunseri's *Wielding the Ax: State Forestry and Social Conflict in Tanzania, 1820-2000* (Ohio University Press, 2009) for a forthcoming issue of *Environment and History*. I found it an exemplary book: interesting, a pleasure to read, and very relevant to the forest crisis in many developing countries. Sunseri tells an all too familiar story of successive waves of dispossessing peasants from the forests and it conjures thoughts of Aboriginal dispossession or of Engel's *The Peasant War in Germany*. His final chapter on dispossession by the "green neoliberalism" of the biodiversity movement has a similar thrust to my third favourite.

Ranjan Chakrabarti's paper "Local People and the Global Tiger: an Environmental History of the Sundarbans" in *Global Environment* (no. 3, 2009) tell the history of the Ganges Delta, a maze of mangroves, river channels and shifting islands that is the dangerous home to people and tigers. Like Sunseri, Chakrabarti sets the current dispossession of the people for "Project Tiger" as the latest in a succession of political and social changes, in this case since the seventeenth century.

Peter Davies: There are several books I've really enjoyed this year. David Blackbourn (2006), *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*, examines how the Germans have, since the eighteenth century, used engineering to "tame" and straighten their rivers, especially the Rhine, and harness their power to transform natural landscapes and create a modern superpower.

Keith Hancock's (1972) classic *Discovering Monaro* remains tremendously worth re-reading, to remind ourselves of the struggles between squatters and selectors and their transformation of the Monaro tablelands.

Geoffrey Russell's (2009) *Water for Gold: The Fight to Quench Central Victoria's Goldfields* describes the ambitious and controversial plan to dam the Coliban River and bring water to the people of Bendigo and Castlemaine. (Michael Cathcart's (2009) *The Water Dreamers* has a wider coverage, but is just as topical, writing fluently about Australians "coming to terms" with our natural environment.)

Kevin Frawley: The two books I would mention that relate to forest/environmental history are *The Zealous Conservator: A life of Charles Lane Poole* by John Dargavel (2008) and *The Deer Wars: The Story of Deer in New Zealand* by Graeme Caughley (1983).

The Lane Poole story is a true colonial adventure and the pace of Lane Poole's life in this biography makes it read like a novel. The engagement with the character and ease of reading tend to belie the depth of the research undertaken to build this presentation of the character,

aspirations and achievements of Lane Poole and his resourceful wife Ruth. The book details a prominent human story behind the administrative, public policy, and industry focused histories, and the conflicting ideas in the later formative years of Australian forestry. This is no better demonstrated than by Lane Poole's conflict with E.H.F. Swain (perhaps better stated the other way round). The final chapter "Reflections" provides an eloquent assessment of the man and his character, ultimately a "flawed hero". Remnants of Lane Poole's life live on in Canberra although some were destroyed in the 2003 bushfire.

The Deer Wars is a semi-autobiographical work by Graeme Caughley who studied the interactions between large mammalian herbivores and their environment. The book is about perceptions of a wild (introduced) species and the way government policy responds to those perceptions. In New Zealand deer used to be managed by the (former) NZ Forest Service. My interest in this book was sparked during the writing of the *ACT Kangaroo Management Plan* (2009-10) because Caughley and his co-workers at CSIRO in the 1970s and '80s provided the most detailed and integrated analysis to that time of any grazing system in the world in their studies of range-land kangaroos. Caughley died at the early age of 57 and the seminar room at CSIRO Gungahlin is named after him. Caughley grew up in New Zealand and worked as a deer hunter before embarking on a research career focused on mammal-herbivore interactions. His biographer C.H. Tyndale-Biscoe noted that he had a rapier wit and his style of constantly challenging long held beliefs in ecology and assumptions about environmental conditions and change are evident in *The Deer Wars*. The book provides a rare insight into the early development of the later approaches of a prominent environmental scientist.

Paul Star: I was much impressed by Philip J. Pauly, *Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. (2007), which makes a good case not only for the crucial role of horticulturists in "transforming" America (including its deforested landscapes) but also plausibly asserts that "management of vegetation in North America in the present day depends on grasping the consequences of horticulturists' activities".

Another Harvard University Press publication I read recently that taught me a great deal was Peder Anker's *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945* (2001). Anker shows how "relevant ecological knowledge in British territories was information that could be of help in the management of the colonial estate". He analyses British and South African developments; I was left wondering how well a similar approach could be applied to the early application of forest and grassland ecology in Australia and New Zealand.

THE FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY, AUGUST 2009

The Australian Forest History Society is one of the 25 organisations that make up the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICEHO). Libby Robin and Michael Roche attended the first World Congress. The next is planned for 2014.

Report by Libby Robin

Environmental history means different things in different places. This became very clear at the first World Congress of Environmental History, held in August 2009. Even the conference itself travelled internationally, being shared between Copenhagen, Denmark and Malmö, Sweden, with joint hosts Roskilde University, Malmö University and ICEHO. Chair of the Scientific Program Committee was Verena Winiwarter, professor of Environmental History at the Faculty for Interdisciplinary Studies, at Klagenfurt University in Vienna. Her original disciplinary training was in engineering. Chair of the International Preparation Committee was Steven Anderson of the Forest History Society in Durham, North Carolina in the United States. His background was in forestry. People who identify as environmental historians are generally interdisciplinary, and not always historians.

One of the interesting "follow-ups" from the conference is a special issue of the *Journal of the History of Biology* on the shared intellectual traditions of environmental history and the history of biology. This special issue is to be edited by Libby Robin (Australia) and Jane Carruthers (South Africa). We expect it will appear late in 2010 or early in 2011.

It was very interesting being part of the group that worked so hard (particularly Verena and Steve) to include all the voices and styles of environmental history in the conference, and to develop an open-ended structure for ICEHO. The Australian Forest History Society is a member of this group - see:

www.foresthistory.org/Events/ICEHO.html.

Conversations about ICEHO will continue at the American Society for Environmental History conference in Portland Oregon in March 2010, which I will also be attending. If anyone has views they would like passed on, contact me on libby.robin@anu.edu.au.

Report by Michael Roche

This inaugural World Congress involved some 500 plus participants and featured up to 14 concurrent sessions as well as three keynote addresses. The array of papers, predictably, was wide ranging touching on all major ecosystems, aquatic and terrestrial with some effort being made to ensure that there were presentations on the developed and developing world. As is the norm for meetings of this sort relatively short times were allowed for presentations. Comparatively, however, there was a good Australasian presence at this first world environmental history gathering.

Although I took time out to attend a number of sessions of professional interest such as those on the Annales School of History, on Antarctica, and on reconstructing climate histories, most of the time I attended forest history themed sessions, it being difficult to easily move between streams as the conference was held in two adjacent venues. The choice available over the four days was still considerable and included:

Global foresters, local forests: Cross cultural challenges and perspectives.

Waters, forests, development: Colonial and post colonial histories on three continents.

Tropical forests: Social uses and environmental history in Brazil.

Hazards of environmental reforms: Forests and modernity in Finland and Canada.

Forests and civilization.

Reappraising deforestation and forest conservation in 19th and 20th century New Zealand.

Perspectives on early modern resources: Forests, mines and cities.

Perceiving cities, birds and the scenery: Australia, the Netherlands and the Victorian children's press.

Perspectives on forests in India.

Knowing Germany's forests - The role of knowledge systems for the human nature-interaction in Central Europe: 1750-1990.

Environmental histories in a burning world.

National parks on two continents.

South American environmental histories: National and transnational linkages.

In addition there were "forest history" type papers in other sessions and a trifecta of posters on tree planting on Lesotho's grasslands that also touched on forest history concerns.

If I were to highlight a specific paper it would be Susan Flader's excellent presentation on Aldo Leopold's trip to inspect German forests in the mid 1930s. This was graphically illustrated by showing copies of portions of Leopold's heavily annotated drafts of papers written about this trip revealing how he struggled with some contradictions between German forestry concepts and their actual forestry practices and how this flowed onto his land ethic ideas.

Likewise one session that was particularly engaging for me was that on "Revisiting Alfred Crosby's Ecological Imperialism from the Antipodes". This featured Eric Pawson on plant mobilities and botanical exchange, James Beattie on luxury plants from Asia in New Zealand and a joint paper by Libby Robin and Jane Carruthers on taxonomic imperialism and the South African and Australian battles over claims to the home of *Acacia*. This session was particularly well attended, successfully trading on the inclusion of Crosby's notable

book in the title to pull in a group of people who might not have otherwise shown much interest in Australasia. The discussion was an interesting one because it "forced" a largely northern hemisphere audience to invert some of their thinking and assumptions.

I organised a special session of deforestation in New Zealand which enabled Jonathon West, a recent Otago PhD graduate, to present a fine locality study of adjacent Maori and Settler forest use and clearance on Otago Peninsula. Graeme Wynn revisited a research theme from his time in New Zealand in the 1970s to consider the limited botanical understanding of indigenous forests and how this hampered their on-ground management in the second half of the nineteenth century. I spoke about geographer Ken Cumberland's and others' estimates of deforestation in New Zealand. The focus was on the somewhat selective use of sources that have informed estimates of forest cover in 1840 and 1900. The session generated some probing questions as the audience attempted to position the papers largely against equivalent North American developments.

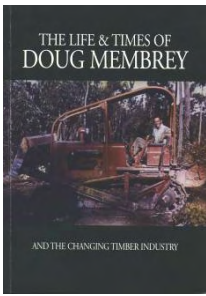
Copenhagen was a long way to go for a conference. This meeting was well organised, the city had a number of nearby parks and botanical gardens as well as being user friendly for pedestrians and the papers provided a cross section of contemporary thinking in environmental history. The bulk of the presentations that I heard were of a high standard. As an historical geographer with interests in forest history I did not feel particularly out of place; indeed I renewed some old acquaintances but at the same time I am not yet ready to re-brand myself as an "environmental historian".

"Forest history" as AFHS members practise it, formed a major thread in the WCEH programme but was possibly overshadowed slightly by the attention given to water histories but still more prominent numerically than animal histories and urban and industrial themes. A second meeting is proposed in four years time.

ENVIRONMENTS: THE 79TH ANGLO AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF HISTORIANS, LONDON, 1-2 JULY 2010

This July the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London will be presenting its flagship annual event, the Anglo-American Conference of Historians and will be taking as its theme *Environments*. Over the last two decades environmental history has developed at an amazing pace, broadening and deepening our understanding of human interaction with nature, climate, landscape and resources across two millennia of historical time. This conference will explore where environmental history has been and where it is going, its relationship to other scholarly disciplines, and the ways in which historians of the environment can inform global green awareness today. More information is available at www.history.ac.uk/aac2010.

BOOK REVIEW



Doug Membrey, *The Life and Times of Doug Membrey and the Changing Timber Industry*. Published privately by the author, Traralgon, Vic., 2007. pp.120. ISBN not recorded.

This warm personal account by a retired Gippsland timber worker was written "to tell a true story about my life, my family ... and my

life in the changing Timber Industry ... over the last sixty years or so". Although it was written for his grandchildren, extended family and friends, it has been so appreciated by his old workmates and others that further copies are to be printed. Doug Membrey tells the story of growing up in a hard-working family living in the small township of Boola Boola, now called Tyers. The bush was in his blood as his father, Eric Membrey, was a sawmill worker, timber faller and later pulpwood contractor to the APM pulp and paper mill near Morwell. Young Doug was eager to start and left school the moment he turned fourteen. For the next sixty years he did all the bush jobs - faller, scaler, truck driver, chokerman, dozer driver, fork lift driver, logging foreman and operator of many types of logging machines.

The technology of logging changed enormously from when the young Doug started learning how to fall with an axe and cross-cut saw in the 1950s to the harvesting machines being used when he retired. Pictures in the book show many of the techniques and machines, including a rare photograph of a splitting gun. These were metal tubes that were filled with gunpowder before being driven into the end of a log. A bar was driven into the ground behind the gun, a short fuse was lit, and if all went well, the log split open. Thankfully, this dangerous technique is now a thing of the past. *

Doug Membrey's story reveals not only the technological changes, but also in a very personal way changes in how forest workers gained their skills. All the skills he gained in the first half of his working life were either taught by his father and other timber workers, or were self-taught through practical experience. It was a system that served him well and he became highly regarded for his many skills. But it was not a system that served new generations entering the expanding timber industry. The death, serious injury and accident rates were appalling and forest work did not appeal to school leavers. Only those who did not know it could call it "unskilled", but the statisticians did. The timber industry and state governments responded by setting up training programmes and licensing systems that gradually spread around the country. This change opened up a new direction for the second half of Membrey's working life. He became part of a two-man training team with Geoff Tyers that developed and ran courses for APM in Gippsland. It was a successful partnership in which he contributed all the skills he had gained in a very practical way. He did this for twenty-six years during which the

courses were extended from those for pine and hardwood fallers to also cover dozer, skidder and loader operators.

His story also mirrors the increasing scale of linkages of the industry as he attended the annual conferences that were started to bring training and licensing people together from the different states. The shy boy who had started with his father in the bush had come a long way when he also took part in making two safety training films. He had gained, as he put it, "a lot of confidence and respect from others" because he loved what he did.

The book was a particular pleasure for me because it conjured the names of men that I knew well many years ago.

John Dargavel

* *A log splitting gun was featured in ABC television program, Collectors, in May 2008. A short article including a photo, was published in AFHS newsletter no. 49, June 2008, p3.*

IAN BEVEGE AWARDED NORM JOLLY MEDAL

Belated congratulations to AFHS member Dr Ian Bevege who was awarded the 2009 Norman W. Jolly medal by the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA). It is the Institute's highest and most prestigious award and is presented for outstanding service to the profession of forestry in Australia. Ian received the medal at the IFA National Conference in Caloundra in September 2009.

NORM JOLLY

Norm Jolly (1882-1954) was an eminent forester. He was Queensland Director of Forests 1911-18 and a forestry commissioner of New South Wales 1918-25. He was briefly Professor of Forestry 1925-26 at the University of Adelaide before returning to New South Wales as commissioner. (*Source: Bright Sparks.*)

His name is commemorated by the Norman Jolly Memorial Grove which is in the Nymboi Binderay National Park near Dorrigo in northern NSW. The grove preserves several remarkable old-growth trees with trunks of two metres in diameter and soaring to 55 metres high. See www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/parks/brochures/NymboiBinderay08.pdf.

WOOD SLEDDING - SEASON'S GREETINGS

This picture of *Wood sledding* arrived with best season's greetings from Elisabeth Johann, Austria.



GEESE AND GOLDEN EGGS: SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SANDALWOOD INDUSTRY, 1925-1940

In China and India, sandalwood of the genus *Santalum* has for centuries been used in religious ceremonies for incense and joss sticks, for furniture items and even coffins. Thousands of tonnes are sometimes burned on a single funeral pyre. Other aromatic woods have at times been used to supplement the sandalwood supply, including some from Australia, but their quality is no match for the genuine article.

A number of *Santalum* species are native to Australia; others to the South Pacific, Timor and Indonesia. The highest quality species, *S. album*, once grew prolifically in India, but the demand outstripped the supply many years ago, and the species is now a plantation timber. Over several hundred years, traders and pirates caused the almost complete disappearance of sandalwood from Timor and the Pacific Islands.

Australia's first flirtation with the sandalwood trade began in New South Wales in the early nineteenth century, when John Macarthur and the emancipist Simeon Lord took Pacific Islands sandalwood to China, hoping to make a fortune selling Chinese goods back in Sydney. The venture failed, due in no small measure to the East India Company's trade barriers.

Most of Australia's exports to China of the *S. spicatum* species of sandalwood have been from Western Australia, where the industry has continued almost unbroken from about 1847 to the present. *S. spicatum* is a very high quality sandalwood species which also occurs naturally in South Australia, despite its common name of "Western Australian Sandalwood". It was once, but is no longer, plentiful in the Flinders Ranges, north and west of Port Augusta, around Whyalla, and across into Western Australia. Another aromatic sandalwood, *S. lanceolatum*, grows in far northern South Australia, northern Western Australia, and in Queensland, from whence it has been exported for many years.

S. spicatum has rough bark and greyish green, leathery leaves. All *Santalum* varieties have leaves which are "opposite" on the stalk. Two non-aromatic *Santalums* grow in South Australia, one of which is the edible, red-fruited quandong, *S. acuminatum*. Another is the bitter peach, *S. murrayanum*.

The leaves and fruit of the different *Santalum* species can vary depending on geography; for example the ripe fruit of *S. spicatum* is brown on the trees in the Minnipa area of South Australia, but red around Shark Bay in Western Australia. Confusingly, the pitted nature of the stones can vary, but generally speaking, *S. acuminatum* has the most deeply pitted stone of the three species, followed by *S. murrayanum* with slightly pitted stones and then *S. spicatum*, which has comparatively smooth stones. In the early years of the industry, *S. spicatum* was sometimes referred to as "smooth stone quandong".

Sandalwood trees contain oil, especially in their roots, and the present day demand for oil is increasing. The oil

has antimicrobial properties and genuine sandalwood oil has a wonderful aroma. Sandalwood trees are very slow growing, particularly in their native habitat, and the wood becomes more aromatic as the trees age. Persuading the seeds to germinate can be difficult.

South Australia's sandalwood export industry was much smaller than that of Western Australia, and has been accorded little significance in the historical records. It was nevertheless of considerable importance to some South Australians, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, and these years produced a useful return to the South Australian government in licence fees and royalties from the industry.

The brevity of the South Australian industry was chiefly to do with the eventual lack of supply in South Australia, because by about 1940 most of the trees had been removed. There were other factors which contributed to the collapse of the industry, however, over which South Australia had no control, and these included the Great Depression and the Sino-Japanese war. Sandalwood was a narrow and specialised export, dependent on the practice of traditional religion in China which in the 1930s was badly affected by war and natural disasters.

Since the nineteenth century it has been necessary to obtain government permission to harvest certain trees, including sandalwood, in South Australia. It was not until the mid-1920s, however, that the South Australian government actually specified what was meant by "sandalwood", having previously confused different trees, including *Pittosporum* and *Myoporum*, when asked for permission to cut sandalwood. After several requests from Western Australians to harvest sandalwood in South Australia, South Australian government officials finally sorted out the botanical muddle and realised that Western Australian Sandalwood - *Fusanus persicarius* as it was then known - did not abruptly cease growing east of the Western Australian border.

One of these Western Australians was William Skuthorp, of Goongarrie, who in 1925 was granted a licence to cut, or pull, sandalwood on Crown land, subject to a royalty of 10/- per ton of timber being paid to the government. The licensees were granted "pullers licences" because they mostly removed the whole tree, including the roots. The South Australian government soon realised that Western Australia was charging pullers £9 royalty per ton, and decided to charge £9.10.0.

Applications for pullers licences quickly multiplied, and in the late 1920s and early 1930s the South Australian government was receiving up to £33,000 per annum in royalties from approximately 2500 tons of sandalwood pulled each year. The 2500 tons of pulled sandalwood was, of course, the officially recorded figure from Crown land. More was being taken and exported from private land, not to mention that taken illegally from Crown land.

Western Australia had previously been the only state exporting Australian sandalwood, and by 1928 the government there was complaining, with some

justification, that South Australia was flooding the market, creating a glut in China and bringing the price down. Stocks were accumulating in warehouses in Hong Kong and Shanghai and on the wharves in Australia.

The Western Australian government proposed a quota system to limit the total amount being exported from Australia. South Australia protested, having only recently discovered a good source of revenue through unrestricted pulling, but in the end recognised the need for quotas. These became law in both states in 1930, with Western Australia being allocated two-thirds and South Australia one-third of the total export quota. The discrepancy came about because South Australia was a late comer in an export industry which Western Australia had built up over many years, and because of that state's far larger stands of sandalwood.

Western Australia and South Australia were the only Australian states exporting *S. spicatum* in any quantity. In the mid-1930s Queensland, exporting mainly *S. lanceolatum*, was persuaded by Western Australia to limit its exports, and the Federal government promised to keep the Northern Territory out of the market, officially at least. It is unclear whether New South Wales was exporting sandalwood. *S. spicatum* was not native to that state, so any exports would have been *S. lanceolatum*, or possibly other types of aromatic wood.

In South Australia an important change with the enactment of the quota system was that the government would be paid royalties on sandalwood harvested from private, as well as public land. The Co-operative Sandalwood Company was granted the sole export licence in South Australia, with pullers required to sell through the company rather than export through their own dealers.

The new rules were hotly resented in Port Augusta. The town was the main centre for the sandalwood industry, and from there the wood was shipped or railed to Port Adelaide. Under the new rules, the pullers were allocated a specific tonnage of timber which they collected, cleaned and then delivered to the Sandalwood Company. The company paid the government royalty, and paid the pullers a set price per ton. Under the old rules licensed pullers or their dealers could pull and ship to China with no restriction, provided they paid the government royalty. The local Port Augusta paper, the *Transcontinental*, and the Adelaide *Advertiser* reported big public meetings and representations to parliament. The community was furious with the government for agreeing to the quota system and for granting a monopoly to the Sandalwood Company (The Co-operative Sandalwood Company, SA).

At the time of the Great Depression the Port Augusta population saw the sandalwood trade as their great hope - for pullers, labourers who cleaned the wood, waterside workers, rail employees and owners of businesses. The community accused the government of "killing the goose that laid the golden egg". It seems that they saw the unregulated export to China as the goose and the money resulting from the sales as the golden egg. Hindsight

would show that the goose was in fact the fast disappearing sandalwood trees.

There was a certain irony surrounding the South Australian *Sandalwood Act 1930* and the fuss which followed. Apart from some far-sighted environmentalists, few realised that the heyday of the industry, in South Australia at least, had already passed.

South Australia was from the start disadvantaged by the Chinese buyers' preference for sandalwood imported from Western Australia. This seems odd because *S. spicatum*, or Western Australian sandalwood, was the same species being exported from South Australia. It must be remembered, however, that Chinese agents had imported Western Australian sandalwood since the 1840s, and South Australia was a newcomer in a well-established industry.

There were also genuine differences in quality, despite the same species being exported from both states. This is clearly shown in a report by South Australian Director of Lands, E.J. Field. In 1936 Field visited China and obtained first hand information from the recipients of Australian sandalwood. These included agents and dealers, those who graded the wood and those who worked with and fashioned it. It seemed that South Australian operators were less meticulous than their Western Australian counterparts about preparing the wood for sale, and did not properly clean off the external bark and wood. Proper cleaning and preparation was crucial, as it is the aromatic interior heartwood which is valuable.

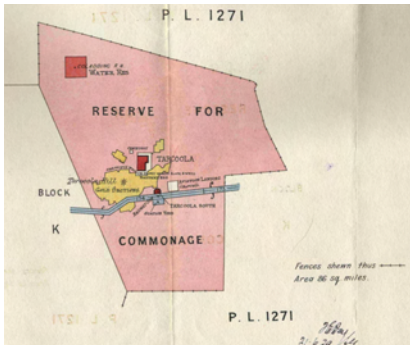
Moreover the trees in South Australia tended to be smaller than those of the same species in Western Australia - consequently there was less heartwood per ton, a difference which can be observed today if remnant trees growing in South Australia are compared with, say, those growing in the Shark Bay region of Western Australia.

Other serious difficulties which beset the industry as a whole were beyond Australian control. During the 1930s the Sandalwood Company's agents in China reported in great detail the problems at the consuming end of the market. These included widespread flooding in the Yangtze River Valley, which was the main centre of distribution, the communist uprising, the war with Japan, and how these problems adversely affected the practice of traditional religion in China; that is, "the maintenance of the time-honoured status of sandalwood as an article of worship".

But for South Australia the central issue was that of supply. It became increasingly evident in the 1930s that there was little point in talking about geese and golden eggs. As early as 1928, when the industry in South Australia was booming, Professor J.B. Cleland of Adelaide University, the SA Conservator of Forests, E. Julius, and the SA Inspector of Pastoral Lands, C.H. Goode, reported on the extraordinary rate at which sandalwood was being removed. Regeneration of these slow-growing trees could not keep up with the rate of

pulling, in addition to the ravages on new growth by stock and rabbits. Their reports favoured setting aside certain areas "for the purpose of the regeneration of sandalwood in order to prevent the total extermination of this valuable wood".

A 1928 Department of Lands and Survey map shows a proposed sandalwood plantation on the "commonage" at Tarcoola, a small settlement on the East-West railway line. The plantation was never established. At that time plantations had been tried in Western Australia with



mixed success, and it was common knowledge that sandalwood nuts do not germinate easily. And while the parasitic nature of *Santalum* was discussed in the Lands Department, it seems that in the 1920s the crucial nature of host plants had not yet been seriously studied.

Until the mid 1930s the South Australian government received a useful revenue from royalties paid on sandalwood delivered to the wharves, and from licences paid by pullers. By the late 1930s, however, this revenue began to drop until by the early 1940s it had virtually dried up. The government was more than willing to grant licences, but by then the sandalwood was so scarce, and pullers needed to travel so far into the outback to harvest it, that few people applied. Consequently there was little or no revenue from royalties or licences.

Western Australia, which had far larger stands of sandalwood and a longer established industry, was better able to withstand the factors which adversely affected the market; viz. natural disasters in China, the Sino-Japanese war, the Great Depression and World War Two.

Epilogue

Numerous successful plantations now exist in Western Australia, and ongoing experiments are being carried out using hybrid varieties of *Santalum*. There is a growing popular demand for genuine Sandalwood oil products, both locally and for export. In the twenty-first century South Australia has an increasing number of plantations, and an expanding knowledge base about growing sandalwood.

Judith Jeffery

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Personal Background

The author has a BA (Hons) in History and Politics and a PhD in American Studies from Flinders University, South Australia. She tutored in Politics at Flinders University in the 1980s, and worked as a reference archivist with State Records South Australia from 1989 until 2001.

Sources

The main sources of information for her article were the nineteenth and early twentieth Lands Department files held by State Records, South Australia. Other material was accessed in the State Library of South Australia.

Although this article is about the early history of the South Australian sandalwood industry, Dr Jeffery says that it was very helpful to have had personal contact with present day growers, in particular Sue and John Grund of Kimba, SA, and Graham and Iris Herde of Nectarbrook, SA.

Editor's note: Judith was invited to contribute the article to the newsletter by AFHS member, Juliana Lazari. Juliana is in South Australia on field work for her PhD and contacted Judith after learning about her research at a "Friends of the Parks" event.

The Society would like to thank Judith Jeffery for this excellent article which is a welcome addition to the literature on the history of sandalwood harvesting in Australia. Readers are encouraged to contribute to information sharing by submitting their own articles on this or any other tree species, or any aspect of forest history.

PETER MCKELVEY (1926-2009) - A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Our last issue included an obituary of Emeritus Professor Peter McKelvey, the distinguished New Zealand forester, who had recently died in Christchurch at the age of 82. We advised that this issue would include a select bibliography of his publications. The bibliography has been compiled by Michael Roche.

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Membership of the Australian Forest History Society (AFHS) Inc is \$25 a year, or \$15 a year for students. For overseas addressees, it is \$30 (**in Australian currency please**).

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of the newsletter will be published in May 2010, with Jane Lennon as the Guest Editor. Contributions can be sent to Jane at JLennon@petrie.hotkey.net.au or to Series Editor Sue Feary at suefeary@hotkey.net.au.



8TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY INC

7-11 June 2010
Lismore, New South Wales

WHERE?

The conference will be held at Invercauld House, the functions and conference facility of Southern Cross University in Lismore, northern New South Wales. Invercauld House has conference rooms, in-house catering, and on-site accommodation in motel-style units. For those who prefer to stay elsewhere, there are several motels nearby.

Lismore, a city of about thirty thousand people, is the largest urban centre in the Northern Rivers Region of New South Wales. The region has a rich history of forest logging, forest destruction (mainly for farming), forest conservation, forest activism, and native and exotic afforestation. It also has a great diversity of biological communities, including eucalypt forests, rainforests, forested freshwater wetlands, and mangrove forests.

There is a direct air service between Lismore and Sydney. Nearby Ballina Airport (east, 30 min. drive) also has flights to and from Sydney. Gold Coast Airport (north, 1 hr) services many Australian and some New Zealand cities. Brisbane (north, 2 hrs) has a major domestic and international airport.

WHAT?

In keeping with the forest history of the Lismore region, conference participants are encouraged to consider the themes of rainforests and rainforest products, and of landscape-scale forest transitions. Nevertheless, the Australian Forest History Society welcomes papers and presentations on all aspects of Australian and New Zealand forest history.

WHEN?

The conference will run from the evening of Monday 7 June through to the end of Friday 11 June, and will include sessions of paper presentations, short field trips, and a conference dinner. It will be followed by a separate three-day study tour in north-eastern New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland.

WHO?

The Australian Forest History Society, founded in 1988, has members in Australia, New Zealand, and other countries. It has held previous conferences in most Australian states and in New Zealand. The aim of the Society is to advance historical understanding of human interactions with Australian forest and woodland environments, but conferences typically include contributions on those environments in New Zealand, Asia, and the Pacific region. The Society does not provide a forum for advocacy of environmental or forest policy, but welcomes different perspectives. New members are welcome, but membership is not a condition for conference attendance. Australian Forest History Society conferences aim to be inclusive and sociable. They attract people from many different disciplines, occupations and walks of life. They provide a venue for the exchange of knowledge and outlook between historians, geographers, biologists and other academics, foresters, activists, and local people. All are welcome.

More information about the Society and the latest information about the Lismore conference can be found at: www.foresthistory.org.au, or e-mail bstubbs@scu.edu.au.

POST-CONFERENCE TOUR, 12-14 JUNE 2010

The Lismore conference will be followed by a three-day study tour in north-eastern New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland, encompassing visits to a variety of historical sites and forest ecosystems, and other places of interest to forest historians. The price will depend upon the number of participants, but in any event will be **no greater than \$500** per person. This is inclusive of all meals and bus travel, and accommodation on a shared or double basis. Single rooms can be had for an additional \$150 (two nights). If you would like to take part in the study tour, please download the form from the AFHS website. The completed form should be sent to:

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