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# Australian Forest History Society

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Newsletter No. 67  
December 2015

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



**Draft Horses, Lumber Mill in the Forest of Dreux (France, 1918)**

*Painting by Alfred Munnings.*

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[www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/draft-horses-lumber-mill-in-the-forest-of-dreux/13453](http://www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/draft-horses-lumber-mill-in-the-forest-of-dreux/13453)

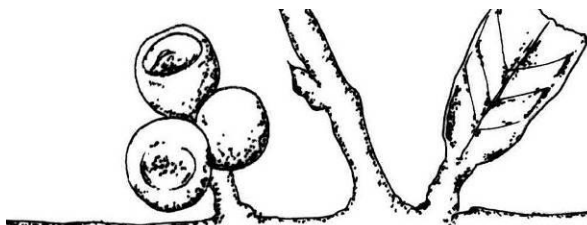
*See articles on pp4-6.*

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### MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Australian Forest History Society (AFHS) Inc is A\$25 a year for Australian and New Zealand addressees or A\$15 a year for students. For other overseas addressees, it is A\$30.

These prices do not include GST as the AFHS is not registered for paying or claiming GST. **Membership expires on 30th June each year.**

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

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

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

Electronic Funds Transfer can be paid into:

Commonwealth Savings Bank  
BSB 062 911  
Account No: 1010 1753

*Please also return this form if you pay by EFT or send an e-mail to the Treasurer -*

[Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au).

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### NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be published in **April 2016**, and the issue after that is planned for **August 2016**.

**Input is always welcome.**

Contributions can be sent to  
[Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au).

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2015

*By Sue Feary*

Greetings from the couch. I had the good fortune of being elected the society's president for another year and would like to welcome returning committee members as well as new member Robert Onfray.

I take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone who worked so hard before and during the conference to make it such a success. Teamwork is a wonderful thing and I for one especially enjoyed the fieldtrip commentary provided by local forester and society member Michael Bleby and local wildlife ecologist Brian Gepp. More about the conference later.

Society membership continues to be stable, although has increased slightly with a few members joining or rejoining in recent months. However, the low base remains a concern for some of us and rightly so, as diminishing numbers could eventually render the society unviable. Small societies such as ours, created from a specific interest, are often plagued by diminishing numbers as people age and are not replaced, or by a sense that it has run its natural course. There comes a critical time to consider options such as discontinuation, reinvention, or amalgamation. A few years ago, a proposal to expand the society's scope to include environmental history was not passed. Other partnerships, however, may be worthy of consideration, for example, history groups interested in climate change or environmental services research, environmental restoration, or the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS). I note that the AGHS is now advertising itself in the ABC gardening magazine and perhaps our society could do something similar?

The AGM held at the conference canvassed a number of other issues to do with the society's future, an important one being the state of our website which is currently both expensive to maintain and not that inviting to potential members. Our local IT guru Jan Oosthoek has offered to look into this and suggest ways to modernise the website. At the very least it would be great if members were able to upload their photos of society fieldtrips on to the website for others to enjoy.

During the year I received a number of queries from forest history researchers asking if the society would be a repository for their reference collections, including old photos and audio tapes. Sadly, I had to inform them that we have no suitable facility. The loss of forest history records has been a concern of the society for some years, which made my negative response an even more difficult pill for me to swallow. On a brighter note, AGM participants agreed that the website should contain information on appropriate agencies to contact regarding lodging reference material and a small working group will be established to follow this through. This discussion flowed through to the possibility of placing forest history publications on the website, to augment the existing conference proceedings and create a valuable e-resource for researchers and the general public.

Ewan McGregor's excellent conference presentation on landuse history and environmental restoration in New Zealand prompted me to think about a possible society fieldtrip to New Zealand in 2017. In 1983, I organised a similar trip for the Canberra Archaeological Society (except it looked at Maori archaeology) and it was marvellous. Ewan said he would be happy to show us around and I am sure our New Zealand members would be interested in helping out. I have undertaken to look into this and will provide a preliminary program and budget and call for expressions of interest in a later newsletter.

Other ideas for society activities (for ACT and southern NSW members) include a field trip to Blundell's Flat in the ACT as a way of bringing closure to this long running project.

In November, John Dargavel and I attended a genteel soiree in Canberra to celebrate the launch of the "Biographies of a Profession project, a collaborative project by John Dargavel and other researchers and The Australian Dictionary of Biography, funded by us and the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA). The launch coincided with the celebrations for the 80th Anniversary of the IFA. The biographies of some 200 foresters are now on the very sophisticated ADB website and are definitely worth a look. (See report on p7.)

Back to the conference. I hope that those of you who attended enjoyed the event. Although numbers were low, there was a wonderful diversity of excellent papers and some great discussions. I was heartened by our ability to have a conference of such diverse topics and think this bodes well for a more expansive future. The short forum at the end of the conference, ably convened by John Dargavel, was a first for the society. It aimed to show the relevance of forest history to contemporary political and management issues, through short presentations and a question and answer session with a panel of local forest professionals and lobbyists. This is something we can think about for future conferences. All but two of the papers (one of which is mine) are now in and we will be working on the editing and layout, with a hoped-for production date of conference proceedings by Easter 2016.

Fintán is doing a splendid job with the newsletter which continues to be interesting and informative. Keep those articles rolling in and don't be shy about offering to be a guest editor for any of the three issues produced each year.

#### **THE 2015-16 COMMITTEE**

**President:** Sue Feary  
**Vice-President:** Jane Lennon  
**Secretary:** Kevin Frawley  
**Treasurer:** Fintán Ó Laighin  
**Committee:** Leith Davis  
 Peter Evans  
 Robert Onfray  
 Rob Robinson  
**Public Officer:** Juliana Lazzari

#### **CONFERENCE REPORT**

*By Sue Feary and John Dargavel*

The society's 9th National Conference was held in October at Mount Gambier in South Australia. Since the first conference in 1988 in Canberra, conferences have been held all other states, Jervis Bay and in New Zealand, but this was the first in South Australia. The theme of "Planted Forests" was particularly appropriate because, starting in the 1880s, South Australia was the first state to establish extensive plantations. Now they, with others in neighbouring Victoria, make up the "Green Triangle" region supporting an integrated forest products industry. Moreover, more wood is now being produced from Australian plantations, than from the indigenous forests.

It was a timely theme because Australian forest history had previously paid most attention to the indigenous eucalypt and tropical forests with their rich biodiversity.

Seventeen papers covered aspects of Australian and New Zealand plantation history, some aspects of the indigenous forests. A paper on the Scottish origins of planted forests was especially relevant as the state's first conservator, John Ednie Brown, was part of the famous family of Scots foresters.

Pictorial history featured in the conference and in the associated opening of the Mount Gambier City Library's exhibition of the digitised version of their forestry collection. John Dargavel presented the library with a collection of 38 glass lantern slides that had been used in training students at the Australian Forestry School, started in 1926. He found boxes of them during the refurbishment of the Forestry Building at the Australian National University that had taken over the education of foresters in 1965. The one illustrated below is believed to be the only surviving image of Frederick Melville (1863-1928), the first Australian-born forester to be trained through the cadet system in Australia.



*"King Tree", red gum, Eucalyptus rostrata, Wirrabara Forest Reserve, South Australia, with Frederick Melville, c. 1915.*



Field excursions are an integral element of any forest history conference. An in-conference field trip visit to Mimosa Tree Farm ([www.mimosafarmtrees.com](http://www.mimosafarmtrees.com)), hosted by its enthusiastic and dedicated owner Peter Feast, was followed a visit to the South Australia's first Forest Reserve, established in 1877 at Leg of Mutton Lake. A post-conference tour included the site of a salvage spot mill in the forest that has grown into a modern sawmill, the delightful, locally-managed Nangwarry Forestry and Logging Museum, the World Heritage listed Naracoorte Caves, a native forest reserve where the advantages and controversies of thinning to allow native tress to grow, spread and form tree hollows for arboreal species.



*AFHS conference field tour to Mimosa Farm*

No forest tour through a famous wine region can be conducted without visiting a vineyard and Hollicks winery was properly enjoyed at lunchtime.

### **DRAMA AT OLD MOUNT GAMBIER GAOL**

*By Ewan Macgregor*

While in Mount Gambier for the conference, Rob Youl and I stayed for the three nights at the "Old Mount Gambier Gaol". This is an establishment magnificently built in limestone, opened in 1866, and closed in the 1980s, and since established as an accommodation facility in line more with a backpackers' hostel than a motel. Rob and I shared Cell 19, typically about 3 metres deep and two across, just enough to have a double bunk along the back wall. All stone, with an arched ceiling and a small skylight above the heavy steel door.

We had one key between us, clearly visible by a large green plastic tab. On the third evening of our final night, I was returning from the toilets when approached by Rob heading to the shower, dressed in nothing but a shirt and underpants, and carrying a towel and a loaded toothbrush. He asked the heavily pregnant question, "Have you, by any chance, got the key to our cell?" I replied, "No. Why"? For those unable to anticipate the answer, it was, "er, um, because I think I might have locked it inside." (Note the softening of this grievous news with superfluous words like "any chance", "think", "might".) I had left the key in the usual place - in the soap receptacle of the hand-wash basin, a few inches from the door handle. Rob had shut the door without

snapping back the lock, or collecting the key. Big mistake. So this was an Australian cock-up, not a Kiwi one. So there we were, with nothing but the clothes we were standing up in (and Rob's toothbrush); all else - warm clothes, medication, electronic equipment, reading glasses - incarcerated.

Actually, the situation was more critical than we assumed. The couple who ran the gaol lived off-site, but the connecting phone call brought no response. Fellow conference attendee Jan made a valiant effort to pick the lock, but to no avail. (This, we can surely assume, was the first time in the prison's long history that anyone had attempted to BREAK INTO a cell. Maybe the first time ever in all prison history.) In the event Jan located and raided the linen cupboard and returned with blankets and Rob and I bedded down on the sofas in the small common room. I had a great night's sleep. At 6:30 the proprietor arrived with a spare key and let us back in.

Let's face it: any fool can get himself locked up in a gaol, but it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to lock yourself out of one.



*Rob Youl and Ewan Macgregor outside Cell 19 at Old Mount Gambier Gaol*

## THE INTER-DOMINION AXEMEN'S CUP

By Fintán Ó Laighin (with assistance from  
John Dargavel and Juliana Lazzari)



Our last two issues have included articles on the Inter-Dominion Axemen's Cup. The first was a short piece by John Dargavel in the April 2015 issue which included a photo of the cup, described by John as "an intriguing artifact to stimulate someone's research" (p3).

And stimulate it did.

The September 2015 issue included follow-up articles by both Ian Bevege and Graham McKenzie Smith (pp6-7). In answer to a question raised by Ian, John Dargavel advised that the cup was held by the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society, but that it was expected to shortly be offered to the Australian War Memorial.

In subsequent correspondence, Graham suggested that a more suitable home would be the Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering which was recently re-opened at Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney. Graham pointed out that the forestry companies were engineer units and their story is covered in the history of the corps.

As a result, the Axemen's Cup is now part of the collection of the Museum of Military Engineering. The handover took place on Wednesday 2nd December when the head of Fenner School, Professor Stephen Dovers, presented the cup to Brigadier Wayne Budd CSC, the Head of Corps for the Royal Australian Engineers.

The museum is located at the Front Entry Precinct, Holsworthy Barracks, Heathcote Road, Holsworthy. It is open to the general public each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Visits commence at 9:45AM and 12:45PM at the Holsworthy Barracks Pass Office. Visits at other times are available by appointment. Bookings for all visits are essential. For more information, see [www.army.gov.au/our-history/army-museum-network/corps-museums](http://www.army.gov.au/our-history/army-museum-network/corps-museums).

## AUSTRALIAN FORESTRY UNITS -

By Ian Bevege and Fintán Ó Laighin

Further to his article in the last issue, Ian Bevege has added that:

"... the detailed story of the Australian Forestry Units is yet to be told; Frank Moulds\* has made the best attempt so far but it necessarily concentrates on Victorian activities.

I have a disjointed collection of bits and pieces but doubt whether I'll get around to putting it all together - it needs a concentrated effort and much time delving into Australian War Memorial (AWM) records and unit diaries.

Ian also wrote that the AWM "has a fine collection of Colin Colahan's watercolours of the forestry units working in Scotland in WW2".

Colahan was born in Victoria in 1897 who moved to Europe in 1935 and never returned to Australia. During the Second World War, he worked in Britain, depicting the activities of the Royal Australian Air Force and Australian forestry units. The AWM has 83 of his works in its collection, including at least 13 featuring the forestry units. These include scenes of the units at work, as well as portraits:

- \* Burning off in Scotland.
- \* Rain and bloody misery.
- \* Australian Foresters, Scotland.
- \* Scotch Sunday, church parade of 2nd Coy of Foresters.
- \* Bush Mill in Scotland.
- \* Skids on the Highlands.

The portraits are of unit members from the 1st and 2nd companies of the Australian forestry units:

- \* Lieutenant Austin Rule (2nd Coy).
- \* Sapper Jack Garrig (2nd Coy).
- \* Sapper Jack White (2nd Coy).
- \* Sapper Francis Deering (2nd Coy).
- \* The Covenanter (Sapper Alan MacDonald, 1st Coy).
- \* Lieutenant Edmond Russell (2nd Coy).
- \* Maintenance (Corporal Henry (Blue) Rogers, (1st Coy).



**Burning off in Scotland**

*Several men toil in the foreground alongside some tall trees. A large fire burns in the back ground in efforts to burn off the remains of the de-forestation area and preparing the ground for replanting.*

*The men are members of one of the three Australian Forestry Units operating in Scotland, sourcing wood for bridge building and repair, for the building of huts and the protection of camps during the Second World War.*

Copyright: © Australian War Memorial. Licensed under  
CC BY-NC. Item ID ART22310  
[www.awm.gov.au/collection/ART22310](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/ART22310).

\* Francis R. Moulds 1991. *The Dynamic Forest: A History of Forestry and Forest Industries in Victoria*. Lynedoch Publications, [www.lynedochpublications.com.au](http://www.lynedochpublications.com.au).



## CANADIAN FORESTRY UNITS

In addition to Australia and New Zealand, forestry units from Canada also competed for the Inter-Dominion Axemen's Cup. The articles in the last two issues have also generated some discussion on the Canadian units, which seem to be the best documented of the three countries.

A short article on Wikipedia - [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_Forestry\\_Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Forestry_Corps) - reports that the Canadian Forestry Corp was created in November 1916, disbanded in 1920, reformed in 1940 and disbanded again in 1945. Most of the article concerns its activities during WWI:

The Forestry Corps was created during the First World War when it was discovered that huge quantities of wood were needed for use on the Western Front. Duckboards, shoring timbers, crates - anything that needed wood had to be provided. The British government concluded that there was nobody more experienced or qualified in the British Empire to harvest timber than the Canadians. At first the idea was to harvest the trees from Canada's abundant forests and bring them overseas. But space aboard merchant ships was at a premium, so rather than stuff ships' holds with timber, it was decided to use the Canadians over in Europe, cutting down forests in the UK and France.

Several regiments originally slated for the front lines became military lumberjack units instead. Canadian troops with their coniferous-tree cap badges identifying them as the Canadian Forestry Corps cut trees in forests in England, Scotland and France, where the timber was squared, sawed and transported. The CFC also built aerodromes in France for the ever-burgeoning Royal Flying Corps.

Altogether, some 35,000 Canadians served in the Forestry Corps - which eventually was composed of dozens of companies (each composed of several hundred workers). Although individual troops in emergency situations were sent to fight on the front lines the CFC usually served well back of the fighting. Occasionally, Forestry Corps units were employed as labour units for the Canadian Corps on the front lines with duties such as stockpiling artillery ammunition, assisting in the quick construction of rail and road systems in the wake of attacking troops, or in helping to evacuate the wounded.

Towards the final two years of the war, more and more Canadian soldiers volunteered for the Forestry Corps, as it was viewed by many as a way to serve the country without facing the German Army in direct conflict. Many members were also underage volunteers - who had lied about their age to be accepted for overseas service, but were strongly suspected to be under the age of 19 and not legally allowed to service in combat. The Corps was not without casualties however, accidents like those which would occur in a forestry camp in Canada were not uncommon: power saws, machinery

and transport all took lives. Additionally, particularly during the last 100 days of the War, the Forestry Corps was repeatedly combed for volunteers for transfer into the infantry.

War artist Alfred Munnings was invited by the Corps to tour work camps, and he produced drawings, watercolors and paintings, including *Draft Horses*, *Lumber Mill in the Forest of Dreux* in France in 1918. This painting, amongst others, was amongst the forty-five canvasses which were shown at the "Canadian War Records Exhibition" at the Royal Academy after war's end.

### ***Sir Alfred Munnings - Draft Horses, Lumber Mill in the Forest of Dreux***

Our cover illustration of Sir Alfred Munnings's painting is taken from the website of Leicester Galleries in London. The page includes the following information drawn from Munnings's autobiography, *An Artist's Life*, published in London in 1950 (pp313-15):

My next move was unexpected and unlooked-for. Amongst the officers who came to have a look, as the news spread that my pictures were to be seen on the walls of the representative's headquarters [General Simms, the Canadian representative, Paris-Plage, April-May 1918], there were two colonels, both in the Canadian Forestry Corps ... persuading me that I must go with them and see the companies of Canadian Forestry who were then working in the many beautiful forests of France ...

The forest of Conche in Normandy was my first experience of painting with the Forestry. Then came the area of the forest of Dreux, one of the finest in France, taking up fifteen square miles of ground ... Each company had a hundred and twenty horses, all half-bred Percheron types, mostly blacks and greys. A rivalry existed between the companies as to which had the best-conditioned teams. I painted pictures of these teams at work, pictures of men axing, sawing down trees ...

### ***The Newfoundland Forestry Battalion***

The Wikipedia entry also includes a paragraph on the Newfoundland Forestry Battalion:

Newfoundland did not join Canada until 1949 but was at the time a separate Dominion of the British Empire and had its own wartime forestry unit. During World War I the Newfoundland Forestry Battalion was formed on Apr 2 1917, comprising about 500 men. During World War II a unit was formed known as the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit (or NOFU). Many Newfoundlanders stationed in Scotland in the NOFU worked on their education to be eligible for enlistment in the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

### Canadian Forestry Unit Recruiting Posters

And finally, some recruiting posters for the Canadian Forestry Units, all calling for "Bushmen and Sawmill Hands", and all with badges featuring a beaver and a maple leaf.



### Further Reading (Courtesy of Wikipedia)

CW Bird and JB Davies, 1919. *The Canadian Forestry Corps; its Inception, Development and Achievements*. His Majesty's Stationery Office, London. Prepared by request of Sir Albert H. Stanley.  
[www.archive.org/stream/canadianforestry00birduoft#page/n1/mode/thumb](http://www.archive.org/stream/canadianforestry00birduoft#page/n1/mode/thumb)

William C. Wonders, 1991. *The "Sawdust Fusiliers": The Canadian Forestry Corps in the Scottish Highlands in World War Two*. Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, Montreal. ISBN 9781895288148.

#### REQUEST FOR INFO - JOHN SHARP AND SONS, TIMBER MERCHANTS

New member Stella M. Barber is a professional historian who is working on a history of John Sharp and Sons, Timber Merchants, active from 1865 to around the 1950s.

She is seeking information on the company and would appreciate hearing from any readers. She is also interested in information about the changes in the timber cutting processes from the 1850s to the 1950s?

Stella can be contacted at  
[smbwordsmith@hotmail.net.au](mailto:smbwordsmith@hotmail.net.au).

#### REQUEST FOR INFO - FORESTRY CAMPS AND HARDWOOD LOGGING IN THE ACT

The ACT Parks and Conservation Service is preparing some new interpretive signs in the Cotter catchment.

It's looking for photos of the old forestry camps (Condor Hut, Laurel Camp, Blue Range Hut) in the ACT as well as hardwood logging in the Cotter from the old days.

If you can help, please contact Peter Langdon at  
[PeterD.Langdon@act.gov.au](mailto:PeterD.Langdon@act.gov.au).

### BIOGRAPHIES OF AUSTRALIAN FORESTERS

By John Dargavel

Exactly two years after it started, a project to collect biographies of Australian foresters was launched in November as part of the 80th anniversary celebrations of the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA). The project was conducted by the National Centre for Biography (NCB) at the Australian National University (ANU), and run with the support and collaboration of the AFHS and the IFA. It has been a true partnership project, helped by grants and assistance from both the AFHS and the IFA.

NCB staff attended the launch in Canberra in November and demonstrated its websites to show how they can be interrogated with faceted browse and other facilities to reveal information about foresters' lives.

John Dargavel (Fenner School of Environment and Society ANU) in Canberra, and Geoff Deane (IFA) in Tasmania worked as volunteers to collect and prepare the obituaries. Twenty entries were already in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, but the project has put information about 206 foresters on the NCB's "Obituaries Australia" and "People Australia" websites - [oa.anu.edu.au](http://oa.anu.edu.au) and [peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au](http://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au). The project provides a freely available resource for future researchers. Although it has formally ended, further obituaries and other information will be added through the NCB's normal operations.

Geoff searched the institute's journals and newsletters for obituaries and biographical records and turned them into digital form. John searched Trove's digitised newspapers for records of deceased foresters, wrote an essay, "Australia's Foresters" (available at both [adb.anu.edu.au/essay/17](http://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/17) and [peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/essay/17](http://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/essay/17)) as well as many descriptors for entities associated with forestry.

Geoff and John were also able to search the records of the IFA, enrolment records in the ANU Archives and genealogical records to obtain crucial birth, employment and education data, which are often missing in obituaries and that the NCB would not have been able to obtain elsewhere. They helped the centre determine when it needed to create new occupation headings. The NCB reports that it was a great relief to have forestry experts on hand.



**At the launch:** L to R - Rob de Fégely (IFA President), Sue Feary (AFHS President), Christine Fernon (NCB Online Manager), Scott Yeadon (NCB Computer Programmer) and John Dargavel (FSES, ANU); absent Geoff Deane (IFA).



## EXHIBITION: THE GREATS: MASTERPIECES FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND

By Sybil Jack

Anyone in the least interested in trees will be stopped in their tracks when they come face to face with Paul Cézanne's oil painting, *Les Grands Arbres*. The painting, on show in Sydney at the Art Gallery of NSW until 14th February 2016, is part of the exhibition **The Greats: Masterpieces from the National Galleries of Scotland**.



*Les grands arbres (environs d'Aix)*  
(The large trees: Vicinity of Aix)

[www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/c/artist/paul-cezanne/object/the-big-trees-ng-2206](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/c/artist/paul-cezanne/object/the-big-trees-ng-2206)

We should pay more attention to the way artists have presented trees and woods even if the great traditions underlying the theory of painting pass us by. This painting neither seeks an ideal beauty nor to reproduce, camera-like, a fleeting "real". Rather, it is a reflection on the nature of the tree and an attempt to invent an image that embodies the creation of the essence of a tree as a dynamic structure through the use of particular painting media and techniques. Cézanne used many different media and forms in his painting of trees and the countryside over the years and develops for us, if we look, a sharp impression of trees and woods as planted and cultivated by man. This example of his work incorporates the effect of light passing through trees. One experiences an entry into a forbidden space subtly created so that although the scene is dominated by individual trees we are nevertheless seeing the wood.

From the Art Gallery of NSW website.

**The Greats: Masterpieces from the National Galleries of Scotland** is an extraordinary and richly presented showcase of some of the world's most revered old master paintings and drawings by many of the greatest names in European art.

Comprising over 70 outstanding works, all but two will be seen in Australia for the first time, including Botticelli's exceptional *The Virgin* adoring the sleeping Christ child. Drawn from the prestigious collection of the National Galleries of Scotland, the exhibition spans a period of more than 400 years from the Renaissance to Impressionism.

Presented exclusively in Australia by the Art Gallery of NSW as part of the Sydney International Art Series, this is a rare opportunity to experience, contemplate and appreciate the grandeur of The Greats.

Admission prices are \$22 adult / \$18 concession / \$16 member / \$12 child (5-17 years) / \$56 family (2 adults + up to 3 children).

[www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/the-greats](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/the-greats)

## THE FORTINGALL YEW

By Sybil Jack and Fintán Ó Laighin

In early November 2015, the world's press reported that the oldest tree in Britain - the Fortingall Yew in Perthshire - had changed sex from male to female. Closer scrutiny shows that rather than the whole tree that has changed, it was just one of the tree's branches which had grown the bright red berries that are usually associated with female yews. A blog on the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh website reported that this had been observed in the same tree in 1996 (see stories of 23rd October and 17th November at

<http://stories.rbge.org.uk/archives/author/mcoleman>).

The Fortingall Yew is a European Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and could be as old as 5000 years, although more conservative estimates suggest between 1500 and 3000 years.

## Further Reading

Ancient Tree Forum [www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk](http://www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk).

Ancient Yew Group [www.ancient-yew.org](http://www.ancient-yew.org).

Wikipedia [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortingall\\_Yew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortingall_Yew).



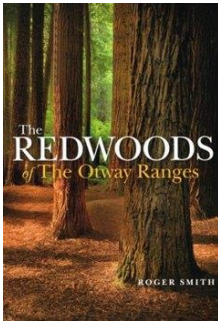
The Fortingall Yew in 2011. (Photo by Paul Hermans.)

CC BY-SA 3.0,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortingall\\_Yew#/media/File:2011\\_Scotland\\_venijnboom\\_Fortingall\\_ommuurd\\_6-06-2011\\_18-43-30.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortingall_Yew#/media/File:2011_Scotland_venijnboom_Fortingall_ommuurd_6-06-2011_18-43-30.jpg)



## NEW BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS



Roger Smith 2015. *The Redwoods of the Otway Ranges*. Lothian, Melbourne. ISBN 9781921737138. 200pp. \$32.95.

*Review by Peter Davies.*

Roger Smith's beautiful book relates the history of a small group of Coast Redwood trees in the Aire River valley of the Otways in south-west Victoria. Several

experimental plots of *Sequoia sempervirens* were established in the late 1920s as part of a wider program to test the growth potential of a range of introduced species. One group of Redwoods in particular have survived and flourished and have the potential, Smith argues, of eventually becoming among the tallest trees in the world.

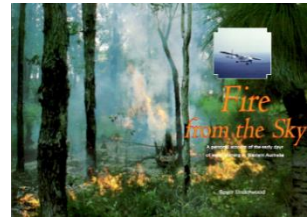
The book traces the history of forestry in this damp and heavily forested region, including the establishment of plantations and silvicultural work by relief workers in the 1930s and by "Balts" after the Second World War. Smith, a forester by profession, considers a range of management issues and pressures that affect the trees, and addresses notions of wilderness and old growth in current perceptions of forest conservation. He also compares the Aire Valley Redwoods with those in their home in California, in terms of growth rates, logging and survival, and reviews in detail the evidence for Mountain Ash and Redwoods as the tallest trees in the world. With dozens of superb photographs, this is a high quality, beautifully produced publication that adds significantly to the history of forestry in Australia.

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Gretel Boswijk and Duncan Munro 2015. "Making productive space from sawmill waste: timber production and reclamation at Kohukohu, Northland, New Zealand (1879–1912)". *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 33: 3-14. [www.asha.org.au/journal/journal](http://www.asha.org.au/journal/journal).

*Contributed by Peter Davies.*

This paper explores local-scale landscape change as a consequence of waste disposal practices employed by the New Zealand timber industry during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and considers whether there was concern about effects of these practices on receiving environments. The research focuses on Kohukohu, Northland, where a steam-powered sawmill operated between 1879 and 1912. Sawn waste was used to reclaim six acres (2.43 ha) of land at Kohukohu, which converted waste material into something useful (lining and fill) and improved the working conditions of the mill by creating flat land. Local concern about disposal of sawn waste by reclamation appears limited until the early 1900s, when anxiety about the negative effect of sawdust on the harbour increased. Such local scale modifications occurred elsewhere in the kauri district and are a (sometimes forgotten) legacy of industrialised timber production in New Zealand.



Roger Underwood 2015. *Fire from the Sky: A personal account of the early days of aerial burning in Western Australia*. York Gum Publishing, Palmyra (WA). ISBN 9780994227119.

\$35 + \$5 p&p. Available

from Roger Underwood (Contact: 7 Palin Street, Palmyra WA 6157, [yorkgum@westnet.com.au](mailto:yorkgum@westnet.com.au)).

*From the publisher's notes.*

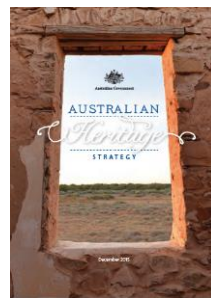
This book is a personal account of the development and early application of aerial ignition of prescribed burns in Western Australian forests. There are preliminary chapters briefly describing the history of bushfire management in WA, the evolution of prescribed burning and some of the controversies that have dogged (and still dog) this essential aspect of forest conservation. The author also describes the fire behaviour research that led to the first burning guides, the problems faced by district staff in trying to implement a broadacre burning program, and then the emergence of the concept of aerial ignition. There is a detailed account of the first burn in November 1965 at Pingerup (near Shannon River), and of the trials and tribulations which occurred with equipment, incendiaries, aeroplanes, aircrew, ground marking, fuel assessment, and edge control.

The reader is taken inside the aircraft during a burn, and into a forestry office of the morning of a burn as the day's project is designed and organised. Tribute is paid to the pioneering scientists, navigators, bombardiers, pilots and beacon operators, and especially to the forestry field staff who ensured the whole project was taken from an idea to a routine operation with a minimum of fuss.

The development of aerial burning was a textbook example of how a difficult and complex challenge can be overcome with strong leadership, good science, inter-disciplinary collaboration, practical field staff and a shared objective.

It is a lively story, and in places a dramatic one, but as with all forestry history, the humour of the bush also shines through.

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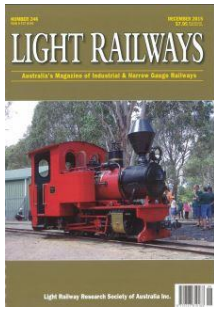


Commonwealth of Australia 2015. *Australian Heritage Strategy*. 62pp.

This strategy was released in early December by the Australian Government. It sets out the government's priorities over the next decade and the actions it will take to support and promote Australia's natural, historic and

indigenous heritage.

The strategy is available at [www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/cb226e0d-ba51-4946-af5a-24b628958e79/files/australian-heritage-strategy-2015.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/cb226e0d-ba51-4946-af5a-24b628958e79/files/australian-heritage-strategy-2015.pdf).



*Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways*, December 2015. Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN 0 727 8101.

This issue includes an article (pp16-18) titled "Firewood train has a rough day" which reprints an article published in *The Walhalla Chronicle* (Victoria) in April 1914.

The article is accompanied by commentary and analysis by Phil Rickard (pp19-21), including a brief description of the operations of the firewood trains.

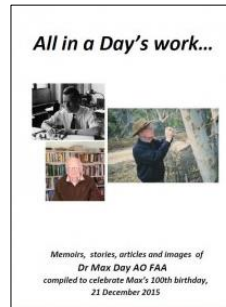
Also included is Richard Warwick's review of *Simsville and the Jarrah Mill: Myall River State Forest New South Wales* by Ian MacNeil's (published by LRRSA). The review mentions "Tall Timbers", the 1937 Ken G. Hall film that was filmed in and around Simsville and which tells the story of the "rivalry between two big fictitious Sydney timber firms to get hold of the good timber country".

A "Field Report" (pp28-32) by Scott Gould, Stuart Thyer and Peter Evans on "Buxton Sawmilling Company, Black Range, Victoria" is another instalment in the data collected by the LRRSA post-2009 bushfire survey team. Accompanied by colour photos and colour maps.

The "Members News and Sales List" insert includes a number of books for sale on timber tramways, including *Simsville and the Jarrah Mill*, but also:

- \* Ralf Alger, *Wooden Rails to Kinglake & Flowerdale*.
- \* Nick Anchen, *Railways of the Otway Ranges*.
- \* Norman Houghton, *Beech Forest: Capital on the Ridge*.
- \* Norman Houghton, *Closed 50 Years Ago* (a history of the Colac to Beech Forest narrow gauge railway).
- \* Norman Houghton, *Sawdust and Steam: A History of the railways and tramways of the eastern Otway ranges*.
- \* Norman Houghton, *Wombat Woodsmen: Sawmills & Timber Tramways of the Wombat Forest*.
- \* John Kerr, *Tall Timber & Tramlines in Queensland*.
- \* Mike McCarthy, *Bellbrakes, Bullocks & Bushmen: A Sawmilling and Tramway History of Gembrook 1885-1985*.
- \* Mike McCarthy, *Mountains of Ash: A History of the Sawmills and Tramways of Warburton*.
- \* Mike McCarthy, *Settlers and Sawmillers: A History of West Gippsland Tramways and the Industries they Served 1875-1934*.
- \* Robert K. Morgan (revised by Frank Stamford), *Labey's Canungra Tramway* (Queensland's largest timber tramway).
- \* ns, *Powelltown Tramway Centenary 1913-2013*.
- \* Dorothy Owen, *Echoes Through the Tall Timber: The Life and Times of a Steam Man 1895-1984*.
- \* Frank Stamford, *Arsenic and Molasses: A Pictorial History of the Powelltown Tramway and Timber Milling Operations*.
- \* Frank Stamford, *The McIvor Timber & Firewood Company*.

[www.lrrsa.org.au](http://www.lrrsa.org.au)  
[lightrailwayresearchsocietyofaustralia.cart.net.au](http://lightrailwayresearchsocietyofaustralia.cart.net.au)



John C. Day (ed) 2015. *All in a Day's Work ... Memoirs, stories, articles and images of Dr Max Day AO FAA compiled to celebrate Max's 100th birthday, 21 December 2015*. 98pp. [ceh.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/wp-content/uploads/Compilation-for-100th-birthday\\_Max-Day\\_18Dec2015.pdf](http://ceh.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/wp-content/uploads/Compilation-for-100th-birthday_Max-Day_18Dec2015.pdf).

Max Day, an environmental pioneer, a scientific diplomat, an entomologist, the inaugural Chief of the CSIRO Division of Forest Research (1976-80) and the Oldest Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, is the subject of a book compiled to celebrate his 100th birthday.

The chapter on his time as Chief starts with the admission that he was not in favour of CSIRO assuming responsibility for the Forest Research Institute from the Department of Primary Industry and, further, that he only became Chief because the original choice (unnamed in this memoir) dropped out two weeks before he was due to start. The chapter includes contributions from Alan Brown, Sadanandan Nambiar, John Raison and Patrap Khanna, all of whom worked with Max at CSIRO.

This book has been compiled from a number of sources, the prime one being Max's autobiographical memoirs written in the mid-1990s. These memoirs have been complemented by excerpts from several interviews, additional notes found within his papers, reminisces on Max's career written by former colleagues, and some additions from his family.

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Robert Penn 2015. *The Man who Made Things out of Trees*. Penguin. ISBN 9781846148422. 240pp. \$45.

*From the publisher's notes.*

Out of all the trees in the world, the ash is the most closely bound up with who we are: the tree we have made the greatest and most varied use of over the course of human history.

This is the story of how Robert Penn cut down an ash tree to see how many things could be made from it. Journeying from Wales across England and Ireland to the USA in his quest, Robert finds that the ancient traditions, skills and knowledge of the properties of ash, developed over millennia making wheels and arrows, tools and bowls, furniture and baseball bats, are far from dead. He reveals how the people working with this wood every day have a particular and intimate understanding of the physical world, preserving unique expertise handed down through generations.

This exuberant tale of nature, human ingenuity and the pleasure of making things by hand chronicles how our urge to understand and appreciate trees still runs through us all like grain through wood.



## 2015 TASMANIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY PRIZES

The winners of the 2015 Tasmanian Premier's Literary Prizes were announced on 2nd December.



The "Tasmania Book Prize" of \$25,000, for the best book with Tasmanian content in any genre, was awarded to *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd* by Quentin Beresford and published by New South Publishing. The book tells the story of Australia's most controversial forestry giant, Gunns Ltd, at its peak, the largest private employer and land owner in Tasmania.

In awarding the prize, the judges wrote:

All the books shortlisted for the Tasmania Book Prize deal with the continuing impact of the past on the present. This is not surprising, as Tasmania is a place with a dark history, and dealing with the weight of it empowers much Tasmanian writing. As William Faulkner once said of the American South, 'The past is never dead. It's not even past.'

The prospect of negotiating a better future out of the past is the subtext for all three books shortlisted for the Tasmania Book Prize. The judges singled out *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd* as the winner because of its brave and non-partisan approach to an issue that for many Tasmanians is still raw, but nevertheless, is important and needs to be told. *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd* tells a difficult and painful story that has had an impact on all aspects of Tasmanian politics and society. But good literature should raise uncomfortable questions. Nobody comes out of this meticulously researched history of the long-standing environmental wars looking good, but this is not a book about apportioning blame. It is an invitation for all of us to accept responsibility for the future.

[www.tasmanianartsguide.com.au/plp](http://www.tasmanianartsguide.com.au/plp)

Quentin Beresford 2015. *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd*. NewSouth, Sydney. ISBN 9781742234199. 448pp. \$32.99. [www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/rise-and-fall-gunns-ltd](http://www.newsouthbooks.com.au/books/rise-and-fall-gunns-ltd).

## NEW ZEALAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, DECEMBER 2015

By Mike Roche



The New Zealand Historical Association (NZHA) held its conference at the University of Canterbury from 2nd-4th December 2015.

The conference included a special session on environment history which featured the following papers:

- \* Tom Brooking (Otago) 'How a new rural history of New Zealand might make a difference'.
- \* Michael Roche (Massey) 'Charles Foweraker: Forestry at Canterbury University College and ideas of sustainability (1925-34)'.
- \* Joanna Copley (Canterbury) 'Lancelot and Little Frog, tracing McCaskill's legacy, the preservation of the Castle Hill buttercup (*Ranunculus paucifolius*)'.

More information at <http://nzha.org.nz>.

## AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, JULY 2016 - CALL FOR PAPERS



The Australian Historical Association (AHA) annual conference will be held at Federation University in Ballarat, Victoria, from 5th-8th July 2016.

Its conferences cover a wide range of disciplines and the theme of its 2016 conference will be "From Boom to Bust".

One of the "strands" of the conference will be on environmental history and is being convened in response to a growing number of papers and panels on this area being presented at its conferences in recent years. At the 2015 Sydney AHA conference, for example, at least 20 papers were on environmental history, treating topics such as landscape, human-animal relations, place making, mining and events such as floods.

In this time of serious environmental crisis, experienced at many levels, the organising committee of the 2016 AHA has agreed to further encourage work in this important area with a dedicated environmental history strand including a round table session.

The session will have the theme of "Challenging the Boom to Bust Narrative".

[www.theaha.org.au/environmental-history-strand-challenging-the-boom-to-bust-narrative](http://www.theaha.org.au/environmental-history-strand-challenging-the-boom-to-bust-narrative).

The AHA is inviting proposals consisting of an abstract of 200 words per paper, together with a 60 word author biography. These should be submitted to [aha2016@federation.edu.au](mailto:aha2016@federation.edu.au) by **Wednesday 3rd February 2016** with "Environmental History" noted as the preferred strand.

Enquiries about these sessions can be made to:

- \* Jodi Frawley, Queensland University of Technology: [j2.frawley@qut.edu.au](mailto:j2.frawley@qut.edu.au)
- \* Nancy Cushing, University of Newcastle: [nancy.cushing@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:nancy.cushing@newcastle.edu.au)
- \* Chris McConville, Federation University: [ccc33@icloud.com](mailto:ccc33@icloud.com)

Enquiries about the conference as a whole should be directed to: [aha2016@federation.edu.au](mailto:aha2016@federation.edu.au) or (03) 5327 9599.

More information is available at [www.theaha.org.au/from-boom-to-bust-aha-conference-2016](http://www.theaha.org.au/from-boom-to-bust-aha-conference-2016).

The AHA was founded in 1973 and is the premier national organisation of historians - academic, professional and other - working in all fields of history.

*Thanks to the Environmental History Network for its information about this conference.*

## NEWS FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY NETWORK AND THE CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

[www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org](http://www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org)  
[www.ceh.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org](http://www.ceh.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org)

### *Environmental History Workshop, May 2016*

The regular Environmental History workshop for doctoral candidates at the Australian National University will be held from 23rd to 27th May 2016. A call for applications will be posted in February 2016.

### *Rachel Carson Fellowships 2016-17*

The Rachel Carson Center (RCC) for Environment and Society, based at the University of Munich, is inviting applications for its 2016-17 cohort of postdoctoral and senior fellows. The fellowship program is designed to bring together excellent scholars who are working in environmental history and related disciplines. Applications close on 31st January 2016.

The center will award fellowships to scholars from a variety of countries and disciplines. Applicants' research and writing should pertain to the central theme of the RCC - transformations in environment and society. Research at the RCC is concerned with questions of the interrelationship between environmental and social changes, and in particular the reasons - social, political, cultural, and environmental factors - for these transformations.

Further information: [www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/fellows/fellowship\\_info/fellowships-2016-17](http://www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/fellows/fellowship_info/fellowships-2016-17).

### *Mike Smith Prize*

The Mike Smith Prize, offered by the Australian Academy of Science and the National Museum of Australia, will be offered in 2016. The prize is open to postgraduate or undergraduate students for an essay based on original research in the fields of environmental history of the history of science in Australia.

Previously known as the Student Prize for Australian Environmental History and the History of Australian Science, it was renamed in honour of Mike Smith in 2013 in recognition of his contribution to mentoring young researchers. Dr Smith is a pioneering desert archaeologist who, for more than 30 years, has worked extensively across the Australian arid zone attempting to piece together a picture of the human and environmental histories of this region.

Further information:  
[www.nma.gov.au/history/research/research\\_centre/prizes\\_and\\_awards](http://www.nma.gov.au/history/research/research_centre/prizes_and_awards).

## FRIENDS OF ACT TREES - THE 1976 OLYMPIC GAMES MAPLE

In October 2015, there was an interesting series of exchanges among members of Friends of ACT Trees (FACTT - Formerly "Friends of ACT Arboreta") which started with a query from Samantha Ning, the ACT's Tree Protection Officer, asking about the species of maple growing in a Canberra garden. The maple had been nominated for the ACT's tree register and was described in the nomination as "a gift from the Canadian Government to staff and athletes who participated in the 1976 Montreal Olympics".

After bouncing around FACTT members, a breakthrough came from the Canadian High Commission in Canberra (which also got involved) which turned up newspaper article from the *Montreal Gazette* of 17th June 1976. The article stated that "Athletes and official visitors to the Olympics will be presented with red maple tree seedlings as a living souvenir of the competitions." This led to the identification of the tree as the Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*).

The *Canberra Times* also got in on the story and, on 23rd December 2015, Ian Warden reported that the owner of the house in the suburb of Fadden had been part of the media contingent for the games and that the tree had spent some time in quarantine at CSIRO for a few months.

The *Montreal Gazette* also said that "Any trees that cannot be taken home with an Olympic visitor will be planted in a maple grove planned by the City of Montreal."

It's not clear if this maple grove was planted - a (very) quick search on Google didn't unearth anything about where this might be, although did turn up an interesting link to the Montreal biodome [espacepurlavie.ca/en/ecosystems-americas](http://espacepurlavie.ca/en/ecosystems-americas) and, in particular, to the Laurentian Maple Forest [espacepurlavie.ca/en/ecosystems/laurentian-maple-forest](http://espacepurlavie.ca/en/ecosystems/laurentian-maple-forest). This is one of the areas established in the biodome to represent various ecosystems of the Americas. However, the biodome wasn't opened until 1989 (coincidentally, in a converted velodrome that had been built specifically for the 1976 Olympic Games).

The exchange among FACTT members also elicited the information that the Canadian national emblem is a composite of different species of Canadian maples.

Information on FACTT is available at [www.sites.google.com/site/factacanberra](http://www.sites.google.com/site/factacanberra) and info on the ACT's Tree Register is at [www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/trees\\_and\\_forests/act\\_tree\\_register](http://www.tams.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/trees_and_forests/act_tree_register).