

# Australian Forest History Society

Newsletter No. 72  
October 2017

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

## Digitising an Old Forestry Glass Lantern Slide Collection



*Members of the Beech Forest race meeting on the stump of a mountain ash  
used as a grandstand for the annual Beech Forest race meeting. This photo  
was of the meeting in 1904.*

Source: University of Melbourne Creswick Campus Historical Collection  
[omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/items/show/5146](http://omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/items/show/5146)

*See article pp8-10.*

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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 advising that you have joined/ renewed - [Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au).*

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### NEXT ISSUE

The newsletter is published three times a year and the next issue should be out in December. (That's the plan anyway.)

**Input is always welcome.**

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

### IN THIS ISSUE

2017 Annual General Meeting .....	2
Trust's Move a Cause Célèbre Among Bill Gottstein Admirers .....	3
Women Timber Cutters .....	4
Feeding Firefighters .....	5
The Work of Oliver Rackham Preserved .....	6
The Colac Firewood Trade .....	7
Forests on the North Bank of the Macleay River, Northern NSW, in the 1840s .....	7
Digitising an Old Forestry Glass Lantern Slide Collection .....	8
An Image of Forest History .....	10
Everyday Futures: An Online Exhibition .....	10
Requests for Information .....	11
Stately Spires: The Capital's Arboreta.....	12
Friends of ACT Trees .....	14
New Books and Publications .....	15
Conferences .....	16
Exhibition .....	16

### 2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Forest History Society Inc. will be held in Canberra on **Tuesday 28th November 2017**, starting at 5:30PM. The meeting will be held in Canberra, in Room 2 of the Forestry Building, Linnaeus Way, Australian National University.

The meeting agenda is below and was included in the meeting papers provided to members on 23rd October, along with proxy voting and committee nomination forms. If you don't receive your copies and would like them, please send an e-mail to [Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au).

#### Agenda

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 25th November 2016.
3. Matters arising from the Minutes not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.
4. President's report.
5. Audited financial report for the year to 30th June 2017 (Treasurer).
6. Set amount of annual subscription.
7. Election of Office Bearers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary) and up to five committee members.
8. Nomination of Public Officer (who may be an office bearer or committee member).
9. Appointment of Auditor for 2017-18 (who may not be an office bearer or committee member).
10. Any other business for which notice has been given:
  - (a) Newsletter production 2017-2018.
  - (b) Society website.
  - (c) 2015 conference proceedings.
  - (d) Society projects.

## TRUST'S MOVE A CAUSE CÉLÈBRE AMONG BILL GOTTSTEIN ADMIRERS

*First published by the Gottstein Trust, 25th May 2017  
<https://gottsteintrust.org/new>; reprinted with permission.*



One of the early plywood training courses for industry ... CSIRO plywood section staff identified are back row far left Peter Moglia, sixth from left Bill Gottstein, far right Andy Stashevski, front row far left Ken Hirst.<sup>1</sup>

"AUSTRALIA'S plywood science pioneers were an amazingly resourceful and inventive group of men; it was an honour and an educational privilege to be part of this fascinating era."

Kevin Lyngcoln, a former CEO of the Plywood Association of Australasia, was recalling his days at the CSIRO Division of Forest Products in south Melbourne, which he joined in 1961 as "junior technical assistant Grade 1" working alongside two giants of plywood technology Bill Gottstein and Peter Moglia.

The transfer this month of the J.W. Gottstein Memorial Trust secretariat to the Institute of Foresters of Australia in Canberra became a cause célèbre among the admirers of this forest products research scientist who was tragically killed in 1971 while photographing a tree-felling operation in New Guinea.

"As an engineering recruit, I worked directly under Peter Moglia, and then Ken Hirst in gluing research and Andy Stashevski, who became my future father-in-law," Kevin said.

"But all of us, every one of us, worked under Bill Gottstein's umbrella. And I'm probably the last survivor of those who worked with Bill."

Speaking with Kevin Lyngcoln, Lis Moglia and Doug Howick - appointed in 1961 to the wood preservation section of the CSIRO DFP and a former secretary of the Gottstein Trust - I gleaned some fascinating insights into the early days of plywood research and development.

After RAAF service in World War 2, Peter Moglia studied mechanical engineering, graduating in 1954.

In 1955, he was employed as an experimental officer with the CSIRO Division of Forest Products and in 1956 joined Bill Gottstein's newly-formed plywood investigation section.

For the next 15 years these scientists worked together to elucidate those principles that underlie the manufacture of plywood today. They were a resourceful group; where existing equipment could not meet new standards, and new machinery was too expensive, cheap machines were devised to do the job.

Five-speed gearboxes from World War 2 tanks became stepped-speed systems that were a cheap alternative to a true variable-speed drive. One of the best reeling systems in the world was produced by "fiddling" a car's differential.

Before the restructuring in 1971, the forest products division was regarded as the only laboratory in the world where you could get answers to every question on utilisation, end use, growth, manufacturing, wood chemistry, wood structure, glues, veneers, plywood, particleboard, drying, and preservation.

One of the recollections about Bill Gottstein's plywood investigation group was the efforts to decide exactly how to set up a lathe.

A veneer lathe was "driven" - an unfortunate expression, but some of the operators literally drove their lathe with car steering wheels on some of the controls.

A recollection by Peter Moglia: "We got the setting of a lathe to a matter of precision, of measurable quantities. We worked out the exact knife-wedge angle, the position of the nose-bar in relation to the knife edge, and a few parameters like the knife angle, and the height of the knife in relation to the log.

"We were accused of wasting the lathe operator's time, which turned into an opportunity to demonstrate the new techniques.

"I turned their language back on them. I said (among other things), 'I'll bet you I can set this lathe up in 20 minutes and peel better veneer than you've peeled all day.' So it was on, and they all came and stood round - and I did it in 20 minutes.

"I put a new knife in and set it to the nose-bar, doing all the measurements with my instruments. The first veneer wasn't too good, and they started laughing, but I said, 'wait a bit' and after some adjustments they admitted it was the best veneer they'd ever seen."

He had done it 'blind', by measurements, on a lathe he had seen only the day before.

"So we all went to the pub for further discussion," Peter said at the time.

Kevin Lyncgcoln said no report on those years should go without mentioning the contribution by Barry McCombe to "the real science".

"Barry, who died last year, developed the science behind the veneer peeling. He gave so much to the industry in terms of visiting every factory and teaching people how to do it." Kevin said.

<sup>1</sup> The Gottstein Trust would appreciate any assistance in identifying the other people in the photograph. As noted in the photo caption, staff who have been identified are Peter Moglia, Bill Gottstein, Andy Stashevski and Ken Hirst. A larger version of the photo is available at <https://gottsteintrust.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/651/files/2017/05/Forest-Products-photos-2017-3-1024x625.jpg>. The trust secretary can be contacted at [gottsteinsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:gottsteinsecretary@gmail.com).



Doug Howick remembers that in the early years, DFP provided for young people in the industry who were up-and-coming managers or, more often, were sons or nephews of larger timber company owners and managing directors. They worked in the division on projects alongside divisional staff.

"One such person was Denis Cullity from WESFI who spent several months or maybe a year at the south Melbourne site. As a result, Denis always had a high opinion of the work at DFP.

"When the plywood investigations section was formed under Bill Gottstein, the Plywood Association of Australasia agreed to finance several projects.

"As Denis worked his way to the top of WESFI, the company got closer to DFP, so it was not surprising that Denis put so much into the Gottstein Trust for so many years."

The Gottstein Trust was set up in 1971 on the suggestion by the timber conversion section of CSIRO Division of

Forest Products. The sub-committee included P.J. Moglia (convenor), W.M. McKenzie, M.W. Page, and G.S. Campbell.

The first meeting of the trust on June 7 that year elected the first trustees - D.M. Cullity, R.W. Page, D.A. Wilkinson, W.C. Kauman (convenor) with W.T. Knight appointed later.

Three founders were invited to donate \$100 each \*, a legal requirement. They were E.A. Alstergren, T. Cullity, and R.W.R. Muncey, then chief of the CSIRO Division of Forest Products.

Bill Gottstein would quote a favourite scientific writer: "Some of the explanations may not be scientifically correct, but the author believes that it is more important to be nearly right, and understandable, than to be academically accurate, and incomprehensible".

\* *Editor's note:* According to the Reserve Bank of Australia's *Inflation Calculator* ([www.rba.gov.au/calculator](http://www.rba.gov.au/calculator)), \$100 in 1971 is equivalent to about \$1051 in 2016.

## WOMEN TIMBER CUTTERS

Ian Bevege has drawn attention to some items on women timber cutters.

The first is an article by Robert Whiter, *One in twenty thousand: the remarkable Irene King*, published on the ABC's "Open" website ("Real stories made by real people from all around Australia").

Irene King was born in Gippsland in 1905 where her father was a sleeper cutter. By the 1930s, she had moved to the south coast of NSW and had become a sleeper cutter herself, producing sleepers in Tanja State Forest, and reputed to be the only woman in NSW to hold a sleeper cutter's licence. Whiter's short article is available at <https://open.abc.net.au/explore/166431>.

While Ian's comment that "they don't make women like this anymore" may or may not be true, he did say that he remembered a woman cutter at Western Creek State Forest in Queensland in the late 1950s/early 1960s "who was a whiz with a buzz saw cutting cypress. She was a big woman and had two small men working for her (yes, she was the boss)."



He also mentioned the four Lynch sisters who cut hardwood and hoop pine around Gympie

and the Bunya Mountains in the early 20th century. He included a photo that was published in Peter Holzworth's 1999 book, *Monarchs of the woods: the story of the hoop pine in Queensland from settlement to the present*.

The photo is sourced from the John Oxley Library within the State Library of Queensland (SLQ) and is captioned "Timber worker sisters from the Lynch family, pictured with Jim Hunter on his paint pony, ca. 1900".

The SLQ collection includes a number of other photos of the Lynch sisters including an undated one titled "Lady Pine Cutters" and one from an article by Simon Lynch titled "Muscular Womanhood: The formidable Lynch sisters of Gympie"

<http://blogs.slq.qld.gov.au/jol/2016/10/06/muscular-womanhood-the-formidable-lynch-sisters-of-gympie>.

Both photos seem to come from the same photo shoot.



Items in the SLQ collection can be accessed at [www.slq.qld.gov.au/services/library-spaces/john-oxley-library](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/services/library-spaces/john-oxley-library).

## FEEDING FIREFIGHTERS

*By Roger Underwood*

There was an amusing incident in the otherwise ghastly affair of the 2016 Yarloop bushfire. A crew of firefighters found themselves hungry and thirsty, and nobody coming to their aid, despite having worked nearly a 12-hour shift. In desperation, they complained (by mobile phone) to their local MP. The concerned MP tried to phone the Control Point, the Fire and Emergency Service, the minister, the shire, and Parks and Wildlife, all without success. So he dialled the Triple-0 emergency number ... with the result that the problem was almost instantly resolved, the crew getting a special delivery. Hearing about this, the minister did his block, fulminating against inappropriate use of the emergency number, and suggesting, amongst other things, that the MP should have gone out and purchased the crew a pizza.

This was all pretty trivial stuff, to my mind, but it occupied the media for about two days, getting more air time on the ABC than the bushfire itself, and distracting attention from the real issue, which is why they were fighting an unstoppable bushfire in the first place.

But listening to the unfolding drama of the missing meal, I was taken back to the time when I was a firefighter in a forestry gang in the karri forest. I was a student at the time, and one of the conditions of my forestry scholarship was that I had to work every university vacation as a forest workman. This meant summers working in forestry gangs, and because this was late 1950s and early 1960s, summer work in a forestry gang involved a lot of firefighting. We would often be at it for days on end.

In those days, the administration of a firefighting operation was very rough and ready. There were no shifts or relief crews. The gangs would go to the fire and stay there until the fire was out. Food and water were carried on the gang truck, the water in canvas water bags, and the food in the form of what were called "iron rations". In the gang I was in at Pemberton in 1960, the iron rations were carried in a wooden box behind the driver's seat in the cab of the gang truck.

Iron rations comprised only two categories of food. One was packets of dry Capstan biscuits. They were always stale and flaky, but they did provide some carbohydrate if you could gag them down. The other was canned food. About half of the tins contained hi-fat-hi-salt meat (bully beef, braised steak or corned beef). This was known universally amongst forestry firefighters as "tinned dog". Other tins contained fruit (apricots, peaches or sometimes pineapple), in a heavy syrup.

There was always an element of "pot luck" in opening a tin from the iron rations box. The tins had rattled around in the truck for some time, and the labels had nearly always come off, so you never knew what you were going to get, dog or fruit. I used to take what came, but our overseer, who took his responsibilities to his young charges seriously, used to insist that we ate a proper meal, with dog and biscuits first, followed by dessert. The dog itself was warmed up by emptying the can onto

a shovel which was then held over some glowing coals at the edge of the nearby bushfire.

I not only ate it, but I usually did so with gusto, being young and always hungry. Also I was batching in the single men's camp at the time, and the tinned dog was almost sumptuous compared with some of the meals I cooked. At that time I would never have qualified as a backwoodsman in the US Forest Service, tough men who had to spend weeks in the forests. I read one of their manuals once, and there was a strict examination that had to be passed by those seeking a job. One of the first tests was "Cook a meal". The second was "Eat it".

Back to the fire grounds in 1960-61. The usual routine was that as soon as a smoke was reported by the lookouts, the gangs would be notified and they would drive to the fire. Here work would commence on attacking the fire edge. This was before the ready availability of bulldozers, so the work was mostly done by hand, using fern hooks, rakes, shovels, packsprays and axes to construct a containment line along the edge of the fire. Mopping up was done by cutting the ends off burning logs with a crosscut saw and burying them, or throwing burning material into the fire with your shovel.

I was lucky that summer at Pemberton, because our overseer was the legendary Ted Loud. Ted had been in the army during the recent war, indeed had been a sergeant in the commandos. He was as strong as a mallee bull and as tough as teak, and on fireline construction he drove his gang remorselessly. But he did know how to look after his men, and every four hours he would give us a spell. We would boil a billy and drink strong, sugared black tea, and eat a can of dog, some biscuits and a can of peaches. When we were so tired we began to drop, he would arrange for us to sleep for two hours in relays. I can remember sleeping on the ground under the truck two nights in a row at one fire; others just lay down on the firebreak where they had been working. Ted, by the way, never slept, but would have a cat-nap sitting in the truck from time to time and smoking hand-rolled cigarettes.

One of the first lessons I was taught when I joined a forestry gang in the karri country was that when you went to a fire, you had to be prepared to be away from home for two or three days, and that during that time the gang was pretty much on its own. We also had to be able to endure the chill in the hours before dawn. After the irony of nearly freezing to death at a bushfire one night, Ted advised me always to carry a "woolly" and my old army great coat in the truck. This was good advice.

There was another element to the firefighting diet of the day, something that would have appalled a modern Work Health and Safety Officer. This was the presence of alcohol on the job. Leaving HQ for a fire, the first stop was often the pub, where Ted would run in and buy half a dozen bottles of Swan Lager and a flagon of cheap plonk. I was pretty much a teetotaler in those days, but I watched with interest how the older men in the gang would each knock back a bottle of beer and have a tot of wine before bedding down under the truck. There was no drunkenness. They just needed something to calm

their nerves and to revive tired minds and spirits. It was analogous, I suppose, to the issue of rum to the soldiers in the First World War.

This was understood by our officers. I was in a forestry gang at Dwellingup one night in 1959. We had worked on a fire all day, but had got it knocked down and mopped up by about 11:00PM. We were just packing up the gear when a Holden sedan pulled in. It was Bruce Beggs, the Dwellingup DFO, come out to do a late-night inspection of the fire and see how we were getting on. Satisfied with the job, Bruce called the gang over to his car, opened the boot and took out six big bottles of cold beer. Everyone had a mug of beer, and there was a general relaxing and conviviality before we headed for home. Bruce (may he rest in peace), would be sacked for something like this today, but at the time I saw it as a gesture of comradeship between the Boss and his troops, the hallmark of a true leader.

A year or two later, Bruce Beggs would lead those same men in the defence of the town of Dwellingup on the night of the great fire, and their loyalty, as well as their courage, was not found wanting.

Many years later, when I was the DFO running a south-west forestry district, I remembered that late night beer in the bush. It was December 31st, New Year's Eve, and a fire had started in the Warren National Park south of the river, to which I had despatched three crews and a bulldozer. They did a wonderful job and had the fire under control by evening, with an expectation that they would have it all mopped up by about midnight. As this was in the early 1970s, and by then we had a strict health and safety program in the department, there was no grog in the gang trucks or on the fire grounds. However, it being New Year's Eve, I decided to make an exception, and drove out to the fire, getting there just on midnight. I found the gangs having a last billy of tea before coming home. From out of the station wagon I produced a carton of cold cans of mid-strength beer, one for everyone who wanted one, and we drank a toast to the New Year under the smoky stars. No harm was done. I saw it as an opportunity to show my respect and affection for my firefighters.

I was very lucky to have started my career as a member of a forestry gang. In those days a great many of the forestry crews, and nearly all the leading hands were ex-servicemen, and they knew about doing it rough and doing it tough. They were proud of their self reliance, and they looked after their mates. This spirit made it possible to survive testing times. Our officers at Pemberton in those days had similar backgrounds, the Senior DFO John Meachem having been a decorated officer with the RAAF, and the DFO Pat McNamara a Royal Marine during the war. They expected us to get the job done, and they treated us with respect, but we were not mollycoddled and they turned a blind eye to some of the little things that went on, things which today would have somebody crucified on the front page of *The West Australian*.

Far be it for me to criticise the modern firefighter, especially the volunteers. I accept it is a different world today from the one I knew, and young men and women

have different backgrounds and expectations. These days firefighters expect a hot meal delivered every few hours, prepared by caterers, with fruit juice, bottled water, a flat white, a steak and salad or a nice casserole, and fresh fruit. They expect to be relieved after 12 hours and, if they don't go home, to be provided with sleeping quarters, a shower and a canteen. It can cost more to feed the firefighters than fight the fire. It all seems extravagant to me, but no doubt it is the standard of care that a modern, sophisticated society should be expected to provide for its emergency workers, people who are putting their lives on the line to protect the community and the environment.

Nevertheless, I smile ruefully as I reflect on the story of the crew of firefighters going hungry when the supply arrangements from HQ broke down and a Member of Parliament had to phone Triple-0 to sort it out. I think of Ted Loud and his pride in his self-reliance and of the way he looked after his men and his mates. It is an interesting to reflect whether today's young men and women firefighters would rather go hungry than face the contents of a tin of dog, simmering on a shovel.

## **THE WORK OF OLIVER RACKHAM PRESERVED**

*By John Dargavel*

In newsletter 65 (April 2015), we noted the death of the great British woodland historical ecologist, Oliver Rackham (17th October 1939-12th February 2015). His contribution to our national conference in Jervis Bay in 1996 will be remembered by everyone who was there.

Now we have learnt of the extensive efforts that are being made internationally to record and celebrate his life. They are co-ordinated by the Friends of Oliver Rackham Group that publishes an occasional newsletter. Issue no. 9 (September 2017) including the following news:

- 308 of his 1073 field notebooks have been scanned and loaded on Cambridge University's web site <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/rackham>. The work is being supported by (tax deductible) crowd-funding. It is proposed to scan his 14,000 slides on the same basis. The archivist at Corpus Christi College, Dr Lucy Hughes, is in charge of this.
- His personal herbarium has been transferred to the university's herbarium and photographed.
- There are plans to reconstruct his carpentry workshop.
- An anniversary conference and book launch are being organised.

In addition, Jennifer Moody from the University of Texas ([hogwildjam@mac.com](mailto:hogwildjam@mac.com)) and Ian Rotherham from Sheffield Hallam University are planning a collection of essays in honour of Oliver Rackham to be published at the end of 2018.

Information on the Friends of Oliver Rackham Group is available on the Cambridge Conservation Forum at [www.cambridgeconservationforum.org.uk](http://www.cambridgeconservationforum.org.uk) (although you might have to Google for "Oliver Rackham") and the Oliver Rackham Digital Archive is at [www.corpus.cam.ac.uk/articles/oliver-rackham-digital-archive](http://www.corpus.cam.ac.uk/articles/oliver-rackham-digital-archive).

## THE COLAC FIREWOOD TRADE

*By Norman Houghton*

The firewood trade was big business in the West Otways in the days when wood was the main fuel for factory, hearth and stove. The northern slopes of the Otways at Barongarook, Irrewillipe, Kawarren and Gellibrand with a tree cover of lighter peppermint, messmate, stringybark, apple jack and wattle were the prime sources of this trade.

The wood was supplied in varying lengths for different applications, anything from two feet (610 mm) up to five feet (1.52 metres). Production figures are hard to come by but the evidence suggests that around 6000 plus cubic metres per year came out of the West Otways State Forest and probably a similar amount from private blocks for most years from 1910 to the 1940s.

Somewhere near half the cut went for industrial and commercial uses at the various dairy factories in the Colac Shire, the Colac Abattoirs, the hospital and the larger hotels. These were big users of firewood energy. The biggest consumer was the Colac Dairying Co. (CDC) for its Colac and Cororooke factories, so much so that the CDC arranged with the Victorian Railways to lay a siding into its Colac yard for wood conveyed from along the Beech Forest railway.

The wood was cut in the bush by hand and carted into Colac by bullock wagon. These wood wagons were a bug-bear for the Colac Shire Council because in wet weather they ripped the roads. No matter how deep was the mud and ruts in the road surface, the bullocks had enough brute strength to keep the wagons moving without becoming stuck. The road down Simons Hill was the worst affected where it was reported that "the bullock wagons tear their way through axle deep and ruin the road for everyone else." The Shire Council introduced road bans from the winter of 1908 to apply to unmetalled roads and this partly remedied the situation but put many woodcutters out of work for the winter.

Firewood for destinations beyond Colac such as Beac, Cressy, Alvie, Camperdown and other places was usually loaded onto the train at Barongarook, Kawarren, Lovat and Gellibrand. Wood also went the other way from Gellibrand to Beech Forest in what was the standing joke of the Otways that locally sourced firewood at Beech Forest (one of the most heavily timbered areas going around at the time) was useless - as the locals said "it was too soggy to burn until properly dried out and when it was dry it simply flared away and was gone."

Firewood cutters and traders tended to be solo, entering into contracts or selling arrangements on an individual basis. From time to time attempts were made to regularise the market, such as in 1923 when the Colac & District Firewood Cutters Association was formed by cutters, carters, retailers and property owners disposing of wood. The leading lights in this group were the major cutters in J. Beattie, T. Gilmartin, J. Ludlow, A. Lucas and W. Methven. In the 1930s Dave Begley and sons were the prime cutters, using a variety of mechanical choppers and splitters to harvest the wood at Barongarook and Irrewillipe.

During the worst period of the Depression, the Forests Commission set up camps at Irrewillipe and Tomahawk Creek for dole gangs to cut firewood and fence posts as part of forest thinning operations. Thousands of tonnes were cut and carted to either the Pirron Yallock railway station or direct to the CDC factories at Colac and Cororooke. Much of the CDC wood trade was carried out by T. & W. Carpenter.

From the 1930s almost all of Colac's firewood was carted from the bush by motor trucks and very little sent by rail, apart from the war years when rail made a comeback for some, but not all wood. Firewood also came in large quantities from farms in the area from Barongarook through to Swan Marsh where landowners used wood cutters to clear their paddocks of standing timber. Some contractors used cutting camps ("tents supplied" as per the advertisements) to house their staff on these farms.

The firewood trade reached its peak into the 1940s and early 1950s. The largest single user in this period was the CDC factory at Cororooke where more than 20,000 tonnes a year was fed into its seven boilers. The rise of the briquette market, aggressively pushed by the State Electricity Commission from its limitless brown coal supplies in Gippsland, spelt the end to the firewood trade. The CDC rebuilt its boiler houses from 1953 to cater for briquettes and other boilers in Colac and district eventually went the same way. The domestic firewood market held up for a while but eventually succumbed to gas and electric heating/cooking. There was a revival into the 21st century when firewood became a boutique item for the new generation of stoves, heaters and barbeques.

At the time of writing, something like 4000 cubic metres of firewood is harvested each year in the West Otways by a number of domestic users and 15 or so commercial cutters.

## FORESTS ON THE NORTH BANK OF THE MACLEAY RIVER, NORTHERN NSW, IN THE 1840S

*By Sybil Jack*

In NSW State Archives Reel 3070 we have a long letter sent by Clement Hodgkinson to Samuel Perry Esq who was acting in charge of the surveyor's department in the absence of Surveyor-General Major Sir Thomas Mitchell. The report made in January 1840 gives us a good idea of what forests were like on the north bank of the Macleay River at that time. The following extract will give the idea:

From the boat harbour at the head of the navigation of the *Maria* I crossed over some gently undulating forest hills to Kempsey on the MacLeay a distance of nine miles and there ..... down river to beyond Pelican Island the river was completely shut in by gigantic trees matted and interwoven together almost to their summits by wild vines and creepers often presenting the appearance of an enormous wall covered from top to bottom with ivy and forming an impenetrable barrier for a man to pass unless he were to saw his way through. It would puzzle a bird to pass through it.



## **DIGITISING AN OLD FORESTRY GLASS LANTERN SLIDE COLLECTION**

By Gerry Fabey, University of Melbourne, Creswick Campus.  
[gffabey@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:gffabey@unimelb.edu.au)

This is a short article about working to make a significant, historic glass lantern slide collection available online via the Omeka platform and the partnership with the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) and Research Platforms at the University of Melbourne that formed part of the process. While I work as a Liaison Librarian with the Science & Engineering Library Team, based at the Creswick Campus of the university. I am also the volunteer manager of the Creswick Campus Historical Collection (CCHC).

### ***About the collection***

The Victorian School of Forestry (VSF) began in 1910 at Creswick under the management of the Forests Commission Victoria.

The School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences, in the Faculty of Science at the University of Melbourne, has a Cultural Collection, the Creswick Campus Historical Collection, which has at its core materials from the VSF. The glass lantern slide collection is part of this material and was used for teaching and promotion by the Forests Commission Victoria and at the school from the early 1900s until the late 1950s. The collection of 952 slides covers "trees and forests in Victoria as well as ..... their environmental location. Includes pictures of landscape erosion, watersheds, waterways, and grazing areas' degradation in various parts of Victoria, as well as trees and landscapes after bushfires, logging, and road-building in forested areas."

Wood technologies, timber milling systems and use of wood in society are also key themes, as are posters and charts. There are also some slides that have historical value but are not related to forestry or forest science, such as a scene at Wilson's Promontory on the old track to Sealer's Cove, 1928.

All the images are valuable for research into forests and the environment and also broader historical study.

This significant collection had been lost for a number of years and was only rediscovered in 2015, when Brian Fry found them in the basement of a Victorian Government building in Melbourne. The slide collection had been the subject of many conversations with academics and alumni during the course of my work with the cultural collection, so given its significance, we knew it was important to have the collection digitised. This process included:

- "Crowd sourcing" - using staff and student volunteers from the School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences to transfer the data from an old hand-written ledger into Excel to form the basis of the data file.
- Using funds from the University of Melbourne's Miegunyah Program to digitise the slides with front and reverse in high and low resolution files through the University Digitisation Service.

- The creation of a library catalogue record, but did not provide a workflow to create access to the digitised files online.

While we now had digital data, we did not have a platform or a means to share the data or engage with interested users. As a volunteer manager, I had limited time and resources to follow this up.

It was not until we attended an Omeka workshop that a straight forward and effective means of providing online access was found. As stated on Omeka's website ([www.omeka.org](http://www.omeka.org)), it "is a free, flexible, and open source web-publishing platform for the display of library, museum, archives, and scholarly collections and exhibitions."

Consultations with and support from Research Platforms at the university ensued. Omeka's flexibility and ease of use meant that we now had the means to establish an online presence that was easy to setup and maintain and that included options for engagement with alumni and researchers. We then became involved with the ANDS High Value Collection program ([www.ands.org.au](http://www.ands.org.au)). This has provided a broader reach in promoting the material and also access to a secure storage space for the larger files and the master metadata. The involvement has also been critical in helping us develop our processes for engaging with the collection.

Our data is now also registered on the Research Data Australia website ([www.researchdata.ands.org.au](http://www.researchdata.ands.org.au)), which provides a broad reach and supports our work in making the collection accessible.

### ***Data enrichment***

While the handwritten index was our data source, there were gaps in the information. Some slides had no title or description. Some slides had information written on the actual slide but had different information in the index. Some names of locations and trees and plants were hard to decipher. As the volunteer collection manager, I was able to do some of the checking, but this work required extra eyes and hands.

Omeka allows us to engage in a number of ways with alumni and other researchers. In the first instance, the promotion of the online display has meant that the slides have been reviewed by a number of people with knowledge of the slides and the study of forest history. An example of this engagement adding value is slide no. 1403. This slide had no data in the handwritten ledger so was shared under the basic heading: "Men at base of tree - need more information".

One of our alumni, working through the collection on Omeka, identified the image and was able to link it to other sources (and experts). He followed up and provided us with information and links so that the description was changed to reference the Annual Beech forest race meeting, 1904. This also gave us the geolocation data for the photograph and has pushed back the earliest slide date to 1904.



This has also led to further engagement with the collection by one of these other experts.

This is one of a number of slides that required further information.

There are other slides that may still have text errors or botanical names that might need reviewing and some that are reversed or need some minor adjustment. We can use reviewers to work through the online images and provide feedback and recommendations re these issues. We currently have one alumni/historian working through and noting the changes needed. Some of these changes may require further information and the "comments" plugin allows researchers to share notes etc. This forms part of the current CCHC engagement strategy. This does result in an extra workload for me as the collection manager. I need to go through the slides and edit as needed, recording changes and reviewers and ensuring the data is consistent across our file locations.

### ***Geolocation***

The "Geolocation" plugin allows us to map the photographs to specific locations. This has been identified by one academic as a possible project for students, especially in the areas of erosion, post fire and post logging landscapes. We can then add very specific location data to the master file. This could be linked to "Then and Now" images to show changes in the identified landscapes overtime.

### ***What lessons have we learned from exposing and sharing research data?***

We made use of the Omeka CSV importer to populate our Omeka site with the data and associated images. This enabled us to reload the data several times at the outset. Unfortunately, Omeka changes the data ID with each import, so we are no longer using this process to update and will be doing individual item changes.

More work is need in the management of exposing and sharing the data, this is ongoing and requires clear planning and resource support, how can we achieve this on limited (\$) funds and volunteers.

In terms of "Sustainability", ANDS has been critical in our ability to offer sustainable research data online. As has been the support of Research Platforms and access to Vicnode ([www.vicnode.org.au](http://www.vicnode.org.au)). Having the data registered with Research Data Australia, links it into other research resources already listed there from our cultural collection: the VSF Herbarium, the Wardle Wood Collection and a Creswick rainfall data set covering 1899-1990. We are now also discussing with the university's digital repository to have the files stored there as well. (And the latest update is that, as a result of our presence on Omeka, we are talking with Trove to have the Omeka collection linked there as well, further expanding our reach.)

The key data is the large file set, stored at Vicnode. We are using Mediaflux to access and work with this data (and this is a learning curve at the moment). At some point, this may be an access point for researchers

working with the collection as well. All other data will flow back to this set. The ongoing data enrichment (added detail) will be added to these files and then other access points will be updated as needed.

### ***Still to do***

We have a further two slide collections to digitise:

- 500 glass slides from what was the Australian Forestry School (via the ANU), these are on similar themes and cover some of the timespan of the VSF slides so will enhance that collection. There is no index for these slides. Given our experience with Omeka, once digitised, we can mount these slides online and draw on researchers and "persons with knowledge" to help provide the data to produce an index for these slides.
- 7000 glass plate negatives of microscopic wood cross-sections and cell structure based on the Dadswell Wood Collection, a nationally significant wood collection. These slides were largely taken by HE Dadswell (one-time Chief of the CSIRO Division of Forest Products) and are taken from samples in the collection, there is no index but each slide has information written on the covering sleeve. This will need to be transferred to a database.
- We are also using Omeka to showcase other aspects of our cultural collection, including items from our museum and the VSF Herbarium. We are also planning to use the "Exhibition" tool in Omeka to run an online exhibition in parallel to an exhibition on the Creswick campus later this year.

## **Creswick Campus Historical Collection**

About Browse Collections Browse Items Map Browse Exhibits

There are three collections in the CCHC, all of which can be accessed at

[omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections](http://omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections):

### ***Forestry Lantern Glass Slide Collection***

[omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections/show/4](http://omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections/show/4)

Photographic slide collection compiled to provide knowledge about trees and forests in Victoria as well as about their environmental location. Includes pictures of landscape erosion, watersheds, waterways, and grazing areas' degradation in various parts of Victoria, as well as trees after bushfires, logging, and road building in forested areas. These slides were in use from 1910 through till the 1950s.

### ***VSF Museum and Archives***

[omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections/show/3](http://omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections/show/3)

The "Museum and Archives" collection contains documents, ephemera and photographs relating to the more than one hundred years of forestry education at the University of Melbourne's Creswick Campus. The collection recounts the personal and professional histories of those who have studied, worked and lived at the forestry school.

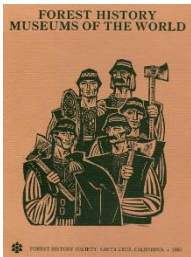
### VSF Herbarium

[omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections/show/2](http://omeka.cloud.unimelb.edu.au/cchc/collections/show/2)

Although it was originally separate from the school's museum collection, today the VSF Herbarium is considered to be one of the most significant sub-collections in the Creswick collection. It is estimated that the herbarium contains 10,000 specimens representing between 2500 and 3000 different species of plants, fungi and insects, collected over more than a century. The oldest specimens were collected in England in 1877, while the earliest Australian examples date from a decade later. Numerous specimens collected by the school's first four principals can be found in the herbarium, many from the Creswick region, as well as countless others assembled by later principals, teaching staff and students. Further samples were acquired through exchange with collectors and institutions around the world, revealing the endeavours of VSF staff to create a collection and institution of repute both here and abroad. Among the most noteworthy items are 27 specimens from a set of educational exsiccatae (dried specimens) created by Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller in 1874.

### AN IMAGE OF FOREST HISTORY

By John Dargavel



Clearing out the detritus of ANU's Forestry building revealed all sorts of old bits and pieces that trigger memories and reflections. This one is from the first and probably the only survey of forest history museums throughout the world. It was compiled by Kathryn A. Fahl and published by the Forest History

Society in the US in 1983. The Australian Forest History Society was founded five years later. So finding this old book brought back good memories of Pete Stene, Director of the US society who came to our first meeting. I think that this little book was one of the volumes he presented to ANU then.

The dramatic image on the cover prompted me to reflect on how forests are presented in museums around the world and hence what stories they tell, explicitly or implicitly. About 400 museums are listed in the book. Some are exclusively about forests, some are specific to the timber industry, many in Europe marry forests with hunting, and others have forests as a theme in agricultural and general collections. Museums need artefacts to tell their stories and can find old hand tools and machines to cover the timber industry, and sometimes they can find artefacts to tell of workers' lives. What can they tell of the forest's own story of change? I can think of the wonderful way that the Melbourne Museum tells of Victoria's ash forests. Is there anything elsewhere that can match it?

But isn't the real image of a forest's history, the forest itself?

### EVERYDAY FUTURES: AN ONLINE EXHIBITION

By Libby Robin & John Dargavel

The National Museum of Australia has joined forces with the Sydney Environment Institute, the Australian Museum and the Museums and Climate Change Network ([mccnetwork.org](http://mccnetwork.org)), the Australian National University and the University of Sydney to create an online exhibition called "Everyday Futures" - [everydayfutures.com.au/gallery](http://everydayfutures.com.au/gallery).

The website explores "what it is like to live in Australia in this time of ecological challenge and to connect people who are enabling their places to flourish". It explores the idea of the "Anthropocene" (the Age of Humans), a geological epoch that affects us all at local scales.



There are stories already posted which will interest forest historians. Here are just a few:

John Dargavel on an animal sanctuary outside Canberra, [everydayfutures.com.au/project/fence-sorrow-hope](http://everydayfutures.com.au/project/fence-sorrow-hope).

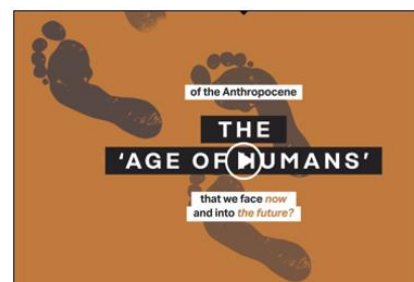
Alison Pouliot on fungi, [everydayfutures.com.au/project/loupe-forgotten-kingdom](http://everydayfutures.com.au/project/loupe-forgotten-kingdom).

Gib Wettenhall on green wood in the Wombat Forest, [everydayfutures.com.au/project/raising-green-wood-shed](http://everydayfutures.com.au/project/raising-green-wood-shed).

Iain McCalman on chainsaws at Beechworth and beyond, [everydayfutures.com.au/project/chainsaw](http://everydayfutures.com.au/project/chainsaw).

Libby Robin on deep-time forests and briquettes, [everydayfutures.com.au/project/inscribed-briquette](http://everydayfutures.com.au/project/inscribed-briquette).

The Everyday Futures team has issued a call for new stories. So what about some other forest history stories? Who has a favourite tree? Or an overgrown old sawmill? The network co-ordinator is Dr Cameron Muir from Sydney University ([cameron.muir@sydney.edu.au](mailto:cameron.muir@sydney.edu.au)), so why not flick him an e-mail with a good idea and a nice pic?



## REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

### *Displaced People of WWII - Forestry in Imbil*

Geoff Seymour contacted the society to seek help regarding some research he is doing into displaced people of WWII who worked in forestry in Imbil, Queensland.

He is interested in the people from eastern Europe and the Baltic states, known collectively as "Balts", who had a forestry camp in the Imbil Forest, north of Brisbane. While he had found references to places such as Cutters Camp and Frasers Corner, he didn't know where these locations/places were, or where the Balts Camp was exactly. Geoff asked if we could help with map references, GPS references or provide any guidance where he could find the information.

We were indeed able to help him as a number of our members had done research on the Imbil camp. Judith (Judy) Powell's work, *People and Trees: A Thematic History of South East Queensland with Particular Reference to Forested Areas, 1823-1997*, was one of a number of heritage assessments commissioned in the late 1990s during the negotiations for the (never finalised) Regional Forest Agreement for south-east Queensland. It has some information about the Balts, including a photo of the camp at Imbil:



*Balts camp, Derrier Logging Area, Imbil, 29th June 1949 (detail)*

The report is available at [www.agriculture.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/rfa/regions/qld-south-east/social-economic/qld\\_se\\_people.pdf](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/rfa/regions/qld-south-east/social-economic/qld_se_people.pdf).

In addition, the AFHS conference in Gympie in April 1999 included a visit to Imbil; the field day itinerary and tour notes are available at

[www.woodworksmuseum.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/imbil-history-tour-notes.pdf](http://www.woodworksmuseum.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/imbil-history-tour-notes.pdf). A further document, which seems to be drawn from the tour notes and also includes some maps, is available at [www.birdingcooloola.org.au/uploads/8/2/4/2/8242731/displaced\\_persons\\_and\\_camps\\_j\\_huth.pdf](http://www.birdingcooloola.org.au/uploads/8/2/4/2/8242731/displaced_persons_and_camps_j_huth.pdf).

The conference field trip included a visit to "Stirling's Crossing. Site of old barracks, home to many 'Balts' post World War II. Commemorative plantings. First hoop pine planting", introduced by Margaret Kowald and John Huth, and also the Foreign Legion Camp, introduced by Margaret. The field notes prepared by Peter Holzworth and John Huth advise that:

Near Stirling's Crossing - itself the site of a camp mostly for native-born Australians, but not exclusively so - 150 Balts lived in primitive tent conditions and worked in the plantations. These immigrant men put much needed effort into the Imbil plantation program and their labours were not forgotten. Although the main Balt camp was some distance from Stirling's Crossing camp a

commemorative planting of Eucalypt trees on the now deserted Stirling's Crossing site is testimony to their contribution.

In one of her e-mails, Margaret Kowald also said that "Given its significance, during the RFA process, I'm pretty sure we logged GPS coordinates for the Balt's Camp and did a site report (can't recall Cutters Camp and Frasers Corner)". She recommended that Geoff contact the Cultural Heritage Branch in Brisbane for assistance.

Finally, John Schiavo wrote a short paper on the camps, "An Alien Workforce", as a contribution to *Queensland Forest History Stories*, a series of papers prepared for the 100th anniversary of forestry in Queensland. This series is available on the internet web archive at [www.web.archive.org/web/20041213095342/http://www.forests.qld.gov.au/forind/forestry/forhistory.htm](http://www.web.archive.org/web/20041213095342/http://www.forests.qld.gov.au/forind/forestry/forhistory.htm). This paper is also included in the PDF mentioned earlier that is published on the Birding Cooloola website.

### *Aboriginal Burning During and After the 1961 Dwellingup Bushfires, Western Australia*

One of our members, Daniel May, is looking for any information on discussions around Aboriginal burning in south-western Australia during and after the 1961 Dwellingup bushfires, particularly during the Rodger Royal Commission, and in recent years. He writes "If you know of any promising leads, I'd be grateful if you send me an email at [daniel.may@anu.edu.au](mailto:daniel.may@anu.edu.au)."

### *The Black Cockatoo Axe*

Brian Lund from Ridgeland in central Queensland is trying to find information on the "Black Cockatoo" axe, used in Queensland and perhaps other states, pre-1950 - generally regarded as an ideal axe for the densest of timbers. Information is almost as rare as hen's teeth it seems. He said that it is NOT the English Brades "Cockatoo" axe which used a Sulphur Crested Cockatoo as a logo. He is particularly interested in a photograph of the branding and logo (stamp). (*Editor's note: I imagine a real life example would interest him as well.*) He writes:

A cousin, who worked in Forestry in Queensland in the 1970s had heard mention of such an axe but has never actually seen one. I last held one of these axe heads in my hands in 1958 and my memory has since dimmed somewhat. There may well have been a hatchet that also existed but may have only carried a stamped logo of a Black Cockatoo, stylised as seen horizontally with wings pointing downward. Any assistance by any of your members would be greatly appreciated.

Brian can be reached at [itsblund@outlook.com](mailto:itsblund@outlook.com).

### *The Point Lookout Sawmill, Ebor, NSW*

Ollie Hardt is looking for information on and photos of the old Point Lookout sawmill located along the Styx River near Ebor in north-eastern NSW. He says it ran a hydro plant as well. He can be contacted at [xosesigns@bigpond.com](mailto:xosesigns@bigpond.com). I asked a couple of foresters who used to work in that forest in the 1980s, but they weren't aware of the sawmill.



## STATELY SPIRES: THE CAPITAL'S ARBORETA

By Matthew Higgins <sup>1</sup>

Canberrans and visitors to the national capital could be forgiven for thinking the new National Arboretum is the only such enterprise ever established in the ACT. Decades before the National, there were other arboreta. While the new one has a high public profile, these others had a high-altitude profile.

During the 40 years from 1928 to 1968, over 30 mountain arboreta were planted, mostly on the Australian Capital Territory's highest mountain range, the Brindabellas, to answer an Australian timber quandary. With plenty of native hardwoods, but only a handful of native softwoods, how could we develop a softwood industry so necessary for construction purposes? In answering that question the arboreta went beyond their immediate objective and left a legacy of significant tree species from around the world, their coniferous spires becoming for many a place of beauty and edification.

Today of course the vast swathes given over to plantations of Monterey pine or 'radiata' (*Pinus radiata*) in southeastern Australia show where our softwoods mainly come from. But radiata's success wasn't assured in the early years, and if disease struck it then other species needed to be in reserve. To make an informed decision about what to plant, ACT foresters set up the arboreta as research plots.

### Purposes of the arboreta

Aiming to identify the best species, varieties and strains of exotic trees for commercial plantation use, the arboreta eventually contained 63 *Pinus* species, 53 other conifers and 32 hardwoods. To fully test the trees, the arboreta were planted on sites of widely varying aspect and elevation. Each arboretum contained a number of plots, each plot about 20 metres square and devoted to a particular species.

The task was led by the Commonwealth Government's Forestry and Timber Bureau - of which the Australian Forestry School (AFS) in Canberra was a branch - and assisted by the Department of Interior's Forestry Section. English-born and Irish-educated Charles Edward Lane-Poole, Australia's Inspector-General of Forests and Acting Principal of the AFS, founded the project. Described by biographer LT Carron as 'one of the great pioneers of forestry in Australia', Lane-Poole expeditiously began work on the arboreta in the high country. The ACT mountains were mostly government-controlled land, were close-by, and well-watered.

### Their beginnings

An initial trial was planted at Laurel Camp in 1928. The first major arboretum was Blundells Farm, begun in 1929. Following were Reids Pinch North, Reids Pinch South, and Piccadilly Circus, all 1932. AFS students assisted planting. One was David Shoobridge (who later

headed Canberra's Parks and Gardens Section). David recalled for me how he helped to plant at Piccadilly North American mountain species like *Pinus ponderosa* (western yellow pine). This arboretum also included *P. radiata*, *P. contorta*, *P. torreyana* and *P. pinaster*, redwood *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, Douglas fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii* and various deciduous trees. 'It was one of the coldest camps I've ever been at', David said during our 1994 interview. Milk jugs froze in the mess tent.

The arboreta became important study sites for AFS students who, at a single location, learned to identify trees from around the world. Botany lecturer Charlie Hamilton told me, 'There's no doubt that all students gleaned a lot of valuable information and experience from the plantings that had been done. It's a wonderful thing that those arboreta were there.' Student visits continued even after the AFS moved to the Australian National University in 1964.

In the 1940s better road access saw three new arboreta planted further south on the range. Bendora, Snow Gum and Stockyard Creek were established on sites chosen not by Lane-Poole, but by forester Lindsay Pryor (later Shoobridge's predecessor as head of Parks and Gardens in Canberra). These were higher in elevation, and offered contrast in aspect: whereas Bendora and Stockyard Creek faced the cool/moist southeast, Snow Gum faced the hotter/drier west. Various white pines were added to the species mix here.

Reflecting the arboretas' remote mountain locations, shelter huts were sometimes built. Bendora Hut was assembled from old roadmen's huts, while at Stockyard Creek alpine ash (*Eucalyptus delegatensis*) felled to make way for the arboretum was split into slabs for a hut. Both huts (a vestigial ruin in the case of the latter) can be found today.

During the 1940s-60s further arboreta were planted at Blue Range and other spots in Uriarra Forest. The highest arboretum in the entire collection was planted on 1762 m Mt Ginini in 1959, and another at southern Gudgenby in 1966. A few were planted away from the mountains, at Kowen to Canberra's northeast, and Green Hills.



CE Lane-Poole, second from left, outside the Australian Forestry School in the 1930s. Note the book on his left arm, a legacy of a shooting accident in his youth. (Photo source: Charlotte 'Charles' Burston, nee Lane-Poole.)

### How the arboreta were planted

Planting was done in winter and the seedlings were raised in the Forestry Bureau nursery at Yarralumla. Trees were

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Higgins is a Canberra historian and writer. This article was first published in *Australian Garden History*, Vol. 29 No. 2, October 2017. It was supplied by the author. The original article includes an additional photo for which I didn't have room.

planted 'open-rooted' (without soil attached). Each species plot usually had nine rows of nine trees, ie a total of 81 trees.

As the trees developed, they were measured to determine growth rates. Diameter at breast height and height to the terminal bud were the two main measurements. Over time, *radiata*'s supremacy became evident in the data, though (not surprisingly given its coastal origins) the species was vulnerable to snow damage at higher elevations.

### The people

For many years, leader of the works gang which measured, pruned and otherwise tended the plots was Scotsman Andy Wood. Later, fellow Scot Gib Hogg led the gang, which by then included Italians like Bruno Monteleone and Dominic Pelle. Occasionally language problems - with a Scot instructing Italians - resulted in some rather weird pruning! Rangers - invariably local mountain bushmen - from the Bulls Head settlement on the Brindabella Range helped with work too.

AFS graduate Jack Fielding was the Forestry Bureau's research officer 1945-1968 and he energetically pushed ahead with the arboreta program. He tested new species and organised the rather disorderly data. In 1960 this data was helpful when Alan Brown compiled arboreta maps with detailed plot information, maps which remain highly useful to this day.

It was Fielding who established Ginini (and rather over-zealously scattered highly invasive *P. contorta* randomly across the peak). A friend of Snowy Scheme botanist Jurgen Raeder Roitzsch, Fielding got high-altitude species seed for Ginini use. More significantly, Fielding was a tree-breeder who recognised the importance of provenance - the place of origin of the seed - in tree performance. This had largely been overlooked earlier. He trialled various pines at Blundells in the 1950s, where Corsican *P. nigra* fared better than Austrian provenances.

Alan Brown (later chief of the CSIRO Division of Forest Research) worked with Fielding, trialling drought-tolerant pines such as *P. attenuata*. Max Jacobs (Lane-Poole's successor as head of the AFS) and Fielding tested the multiple natural locations of *radiata* and some of this work was a world first. In 1978 Ken Eldridge, by then leading the arboreta scientific work, executed the first systematic and definitive seed collection trip of *radiata*, bringing back 70 kg of seed from the North American mainland and island sites. Fielding, Jacobs and Brown all contributed to progeny and clonal trials, some of which was world-leading.

The arboreta results, including the way in which *radiata* outperformed other species, were published in papers and at conference presentations. The first of the latter was at the Institute of Foresters of Australia Canberra meeting in 1953. Further data was aired at the 1957 British Commonwealth Forestry Conference. By the 1990s, data from the arboreta was being used in United Nations publications.

Information gained from the arboreta also had some value for landscape plantings in Canberra parks and streets, though it was fairly minor.

### Changing attitudes to the plantings

Attitudes changed over time and while some foresters like Jack Fielding wanted to see the Brindabellas' native forests replaced by pines, some thought otherwise. Gradually an awareness of the ecological and aesthetic values of Australian native bushland permeated the community. A move for a national park (eventually Namadgi) was under way. With the arboreta measurement program completed in the 1970s, the plots assumed a lower priority for CSIRO which by then was in charge. The arboreta at Ginini and later Stockyard Creek were removed because of concerns about wilding infestation of native forest. Two noble firs (*Abies procera*) were retained at Stockyard and remain today as exotic monuments in an otherwise mountain native forest.

### The later story

Some arboreta were abandoned, but there was increasing recognition of the educational and recreational values of the remaining arboreta for the public, and five key arboreta were actively maintained. Species labels were placed on plots, information leaflets were printed, and walking trails with interpretive text were installed at Blundells Farm, which had become the most significant arboretum in the collection. I often visited Blundells during the 1980s-90s, incorporating it into bushwalks for community groups, and in 2000 I made a short ABC television item there.

By the beginning of the present century, 20 arboreta survived. Visitors could experience the conical shapes, dark hues, deep shade and wind-driven acoustic qualities of these trees from around the world. They were the best and biggest collection of conifers in the nation, with some being the oldest in Australia. Then came the 2003 bushfires. All but one arboretum - Bendora - were destroyed in what was a tragic loss of cultural heritage in the high country. Yet we are fortunate to still have Bendora, which has taken over Blundells' interpretive role with tracks, signage and the shelter hut making it a very special place to visit in Canberra's mountain hinterland.



Top: Author sketch of the shelter hut at Bendora Arboretum, ca 1990s.



Bottom: One of the embossed aluminium signs made by Bill Madden, and installed in the 1970s to inform arboretum visitors. *Pinus ponderosa* is the most widely distributed pine in America. (Photo: Matthew Higgins)

The plaque reads:

PINUS PONDEROSA  
WESTERN YELLOW PINE  
WESTERN N. AMERICA  
PLANTED 1946 PLOT 51

## FRIENDS OF ACT TREES

The following two articles were first published by Friends of ACT Trees (FACTT) in FACTT News no. 41, June 2017 (<https://sites.google.com/site/facttcanberra>). They are used with the permission of the FACTT News editor, Steve Thomas.

### A Lost Arboretum

By Tony Fearnside

A while ago, I was looking through some earlier reports and noticed that the GPS coordinates for the National Arboretum, Canberra and for an older arboretum (Greenhills - number 21 in the list of arboreta established by the CSIRO Division of Forestry and its predecessors) were almost identical, certainly they were close enough for the older arboretum to be easily visible from National Arboretum - if it still existed.

So, what happened to Arboretum 21 and what was its *raison d'être*? The short answers are that it was removed to make way for Tuggeranong Parkway and Glenloch Interchange in the years preceding self-government in the ACT. Also, it was never seen to be an arboretum with inspiring, fast-growing, tall trees like those in the more impressive arboreta on moister sites with more favourable soils (eg. Bundells and Bendora). This was mainly because it was established to evaluate potential species for commercial tree planting at lower elevations, which usually meant lower rainfall and, in this case, less favourable soil. This would have been particularly so in 1954, when the trees were planted, that is, before the advent of mechanised ground preparation in this part of the ACT.

However, the list of species originally planted included several less common pines from Mexico: *Pinus teocote*, *P. montezumae*, *P. michoacana* and *P. douglasiana* as well as the more familiar *P. torreyana* (from USA) and *P. patula* (which is naturally widely distributed in Mexico)\*. The inclusion of Mexican species probably reflected the results of a seed collecting expedition and would have been unusual in those days. Other species that were originally planted reflect the recognition being given to species which might tolerate drier sites, eg. *P. brutia*.

When Dave Lea and I visited the site in May 1991, the few survivors from the original planting would have been 37 years old and there had already been extensive clearing for the Parkway. As a result, only a few trees close to the edge of the Parkway remained: *Pinus teocote* (about 14 trees), *P. montezumae* (4 trees), *P. pinaster* (1 tree), *P. patula* (3 trees), and *P. brutia* (7 trees), as well as several *P. radiata*. Of these, *P. radiata*, we noted, had grown to about 18 metres, while *P. teocote* and *P. montezumae* had each reached only about 12 metres (the usual result for *radiata* pine!).

Perhaps the last, unfavourable, words should rest with CSIRO scientists Tony Rout and John Doran who wrote in 1974 that "This is a poor arboretum of untidy plots. The site is rocky and site quality as indicated by the growth of *P. radiata* is poor."

\* Not forgetting that two of the three *radiata* pine provenances are on Mexican islands!

**Reference:** A Fearnside and D Lea, *Arboreta in the A.C.T., Their Condition, Values and Recommendations for their Management*, May 1991.

### Some Eucalypts in Autumn

By Steve Thomas

You would be forgiven for thinking we had a brief hailstorm. The small white dots drifting on the footpath contrasting with the colourful leaves of the deciduous trees which have also fallen to the ground. As one walks on the white dots they crunch and snap. On close inspection they are cones with a pointy top, light brown on the inside and enamel-like on the outside, about 5mm in diameter.



They are the operculum from a myriad buds of the large *Eucalyptus cinerea* which line this small street, forced from the bud by the pressure of the stamens emerging to start the process of reproduction, flowering now and providing food for the birds and insects at the end of the summer profusion. The trees' still juvenile rounded blue-green leaves contrasting with the reds, yellows and browns of the non-native deciduous species which are so appreciated in the "Garden City".

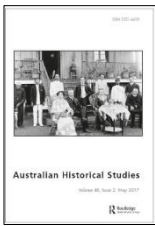
This seemingly inconspicuous tip of the bud is the characteristic feature of the eucalypts like the acorn is for the genus *Quercus*.

In 1777 on the third Cook visit, David Nelson collected a specimen from a tree on Bruny Island. The specimen was taken to the British Museum where in 1788 a visiting French self-taught botanist Charles-Louis L'Heritier de Brutelle named it *Eucalyptus obliqua* - Eucalyptus from the Greek *eu* and *calyptos* meaning well covered and *obliqua* from the fact that the leaf edges are not the same shape where they join the petiole. L'Heritier was not to know he had named a genus. And so began the naming of over 500 species of this almost uniquely Australian genus.

L'Heritier (1746-1800) although from the upper class was a supporter of the French Revolution and was murdered on the 18th August in Paris by an unknown person. The small "hailstones" crunching under my shoes carry within their biology a history and a strip of genetic code common to all of the species in this remarkable genus.



## NEW BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



*Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 48, Issue 2, May 2017. ISSN 1940-5049.

*Drawn from the publisher's notes.*

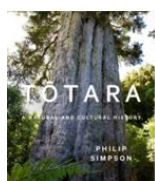
The journal *Australian Historical Studies* (AHS) recently published its second virtual special issue, *Rural History & Environmental History*. This issue draws upon decades of discussion and debate

in AHS about the relationships between peoples and their environments since 1788. An introductory essay by Ruth Morgan outlines the economic, social, cultural, political and technological issues that have concerned historians of non-metropolitan Australia, including challenges to the dominant narrative of rural decline. Morgan also charts the emergence of a distinctively Australian approach to environmental history that incorporates recognition of indigenous knowledge and has, more recently, addressed global change and the Anthropocene.

By transcending disciplinary and spatial boundaries, the work of historians has revealed the complexities of colonisation and the networks of exchange that influence how Australians managed and were influenced by environments, whether in rural or urban locations. From today's perspective, history is an important form of knowledge for making sense of environmental changes in the past, but also for looking forward into the unfolding twenty-first century.

In showcasing sixteen key articles by some of Australia's most noteworthy historians, this volume is an indispensable guide for those seeking a deeper understanding of the significance and vibrancy of rural and environmental histories.

The articles in this virtual special issue are free to view until the end of December 2017. They can be accessed at [explore.tandfonline.com/content/ah/rahs-ahs-classics-virtual-special-issue](http://explore.tandfonline.com/content/ah/rahs-ahs-classics-virtual-special-issue).



Philip Simpson, 2017. *Totara: A Natural and Cultural History*. Auckland University Press. ISBN 9781869408190.

[www.press.auckland.ac.nz/en/browse-books/all-books/books-2017/totara.html](http://www.press.auckland.ac.nz/en/browse-books/all-books/books-2017/totara.html).

*From the publisher's notes.*

A wonder of evolution, the big tree of the forest, the wood behind Māori carving and Pākehā fence posts: the "mighty totara" is New Zealand's tree and this book tells its story.

The "mighty totara" is one of our most extraordinary trees. Among the biggest and oldest trees in the New Zealand forest, the heart of Māori carving and culture, trailing no. 8 wire as fence posts on settler farms, clambered up in the Pureora protests of the 1980s: the story of New Zealand can be told through totara.

Simpson tells that story like nobody else could. In words and pictures, through waka and leaves, farmers and carvers, he takes us deep inside the trees: their botany and evolution, their role in Māori life and lore, their uses

by Pākehā, and their current status in our environment and culture. By doing so, Simpson illuminates the natural world and the story of Māori and Pākehā in this country. Our largest trees, the kauri Tāne Mahuta and the tōtara Pouakani, are both thought to be around 1000 years old. They were here before we humans were and their relatives will probably be here when we are gone. Tōtara has been central to life in this country for thousands of years. This book tells a great tree's story, and that is our story too.

Philip Simpson is a botanist and author of *Dancing Leaves: The Story of New Zealand's Cabbage Tree*, *Ti Kōuka* (Canterbury University Press, 2000) and *Pōhutukawa and Rātā: New Zealand's Iron-hearted Trees* (Te Papa Press, 2005). Both books won Montana Book Awards in the Environment category and Pōhutukawa and Rātā also won the Montana Medal for best non-fiction book. Simpson is unique in his ability to combine the scientific expertise of the trained botanist with a writer's ability to understand the history of Māori and Pākehā interactions with the environment. He was awarded the Creative New Zealand Michael King Writer's Fellowship to work on *Tōtara: A Natural and Cultural History*.



*International Review of Environmental History*, Vol. 3 Issue 1 (June 2017) and Vol. 3 Issue 2 (October 2017). ANU Press. ISSN (print): 2205-3204 / ISSN (online): 2205-3212.

*By Paul Star and Fintán Ó Laighin*

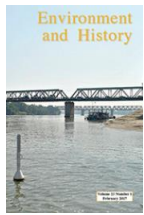
Two editions of this journal have been published since our last newsletter. It is now published biannually after annual issues in 2015 and 2016. The third issue includes a lot which should interest AFHS members. There is a long article by Paul Star on changing attitudes to the New Zealand environment, one by Mike



Roche on "Seeing scenic New Zealand: W.W. Smith's eye and the Scenery Preservation Commission, 1904-06", and three articles about Eric Pawson on the occasion of his retirement. Those AFHS members who attended the excellent field trip to the west coast of South Island which he organised a few years ago (after the AFHS conference in Christchurch in 2007) will no doubt remember Eric.

The fourth issue contains four main articles, none specifically on forest history, but which are good reading all the same. The cover story is on shark management in Australia and South Africa, followed by a review of how Russian and Soviet environmental history is often overlooked in global environmental histories, a history of the introduction of stoats and weasels to New Zealand in the 1880s and '90s (which has a lot of relevance to forests and forest wildlife), and finally an account of the spread of bubonic plague in colonial Lagos (Nigeria) in the 1920s and '30s.

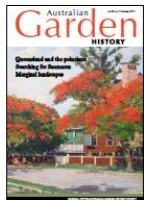
All four issues are available for free download from [press.anu.edu.au/publications/international-review-environmental-history](http://press.anu.edu.au/publications/international-review-environmental-history). Printed copies can be ordered for \$30 each.



André Brett, 2017. "A Sudden Fancy for Tree-Planting? Forest Conservation and the Demise of New Zealand's Provinces" in *Environment and History*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp123-45. White Horse Press. ISSN 0967-3407.

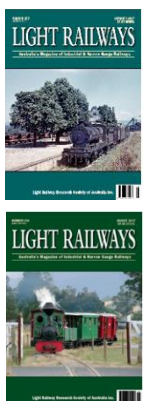
[www.whpress.co.uk/EH/EH23.html](http://www.whpress.co.uk/EH/EH23.html)

**Abstract:** New Zealand provides a valuable case study of the relationship between colonial statecraft and forest conservation. This article explores the connections between Premier Julius Vogel's Forests Act of 1874 and the abolition of New Zealand's provinces in 1876, locating conservation within the broader context of popular discontent with provincialism. It argues that previous perspectives have either downplayed or exaggerated the significance of conservation to provincial abolition, and that the relationship between the two was complex and uneven. Abolition profoundly affected conservation, but the stimulus for abolition had been gathering elsewhere even as conservation shaped its timing.



*Australian Garden History*, Vol. 29 No. 2, October 2017. Australian Garden History Society. ISSN 1033-3673. [www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au)

This issue includes an article titled "Stately spires: the capital's arboreta" by Canberra historian and writer Matthew Higgins (reprinted in this issue of the AFHS newsletter).



*Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways*, August 2017 and October 2017. Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN 0 727 8101. [www.lrrsa.org.au](http://www.lrrsa.org.au)

Two editions of *Light Railways* have appeared since our last issue, both of which contain items of relevance to forest history. The magazine has increased the number of pages from 40 to 48 to help editor Richard Warwick get through the large amount of material he has on hand.

The August issue has, among other things, a field report on the Slocumb & Walker sawmill and tramway, Mount Disappointment, Victoria.

The October issue continues with part 2 of Jim Stokes's account of the "The later years of the Marrawah Tramway" in north-western Tasmania (13pp). Part 1 was published in April 2017. The "Looking Back" section has a series of photos from the Otway Ranges in Victoria, taken along the 2'6" gauge branch line (the Beechy Line) that ran from Colac to Gellibrand and Beech Forest. Logs were one of many commodities carried on this line. One article appears under the heading "Treasures from Trove" and reprints an article published by the *Weekly Times* in December 2011 - "The Timber Getters" by Louis Esson. Also included is a field report of the JA Harper Timber Tramway in Mount Disappointment in Victoria, part of the LRRSA post-2009 bushfire survey. Harper's mill operated in the early 20th century.

## CONFERENCES



**Looking Back - Looking Forward: 30 years of Tasmania's forest practices system**, Hobart, 20th-22nd November 2017.

[www.conferences.com.au/fpa2017](http://www.conferences.com.au/fpa2017)

The Tasmanian Forest Practices Authority is hosting a two-day conference in November 2017 to look back over the first 30 years of Tasmania's forest practices system, and to use this perspective to consider directions in forest practices regulation in Tasmania and elsewhere.

In 1987, the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code was released and the state's first Forest Practices Officers were appointed. The forest practices system has evolved in response to changes in technology, scientific knowledge and community expectations. It is an opportune time to review the system, and consider trends and possibilities in Tasmanian, national and international forest regulation.



**The University of Sydney Postgraduate History Conference 2017 - The Past and the Curious: (Re)viewing History**, 30th November-1st December.

<https://usydhistoryconference.wordpress.com>

The program is yet to be posted, but one of the speakers will be AFHS committee member Leith Davis who is presenting on "Reinterpreting Red Cedar in Colonial Australian History: History and Ecology".



**The Australian Historical Association Conference 2018**, Canberra, 2nd to 6th July.

The association has issued a call for paper along the theme of "The Scale of History". The conference website advises that "Historians make choices about the scale of their inquiry. They set parameters for their projects - temporal, geographical, social, archival - which shape their research strategies, their potential audiences, and their interpretations and arguments. We engage with scale in a variety of ways, including: big history, microhistory, global history, local history, deep history, planetary history, biography, emotions, digital history and big data, and document analysis." Online submission of abstracts opens in November 2017 and closes 28th February 2018. For details, see <http://history.cass.anu.edu.au/aha2018>.

## EXHIBITION



**Dombrovskis: Journeys into the Wild**, National Library of Australia, Canberra,

21st September 2017 to 30th January 2018.

Peter Dombrovskis (1945-96) was one of the world's foremost wilderness photographers. His powerful, reflective and deeply personal images of the unique Tasmanian wilderness had a lasting impact, changing the way Australians think about their environment. The library has over 3,000 Dombrovskis transparencies, and has printed 70 of the best for this exhibition, the most complete survey of his work to date in Australia. The exhibition website includes a link to a short video prepared by the library's Sam Cooper. See [www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/dombrovskis](http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/dombrovskis).