

# Australian Forest History Society

Newsletter No. 80  
July 2020

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

## John Curtin, January 1885-July 1945, Timber Union Organiser and Prime Minister



*See pages 3-5*

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## NEXT ISSUE

The newsletter is published three times a year and the next issue should be out in December 2020.

**Input is always welcome.**

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

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

*By Fintán Ó Laighin*

This is one of the few issues under my editorial stewardship, possibly even the first, which has come out ahead of schedule. The impetus was an article received from Michael Bleby on "The Business of Christmas Trees" which I thought would look unseasonal in an August issue but which I could perhaps justify as a Christmas-in-July contribution.

Another reason for the July issue is to mark the 75th anniversary of the death in 1945 of Australia's fourteenth Prime Minister, John Curtin. Before his election to the House of Representatives in 1928 (after unsuccessful attempts in 1914, 1919 and 1925), he had been an organiser for the Victorian Timber Workers' Union.

Michael Roche in New Zealand has contributed two articles on Owen Jones, including a lengthy article on his time in Ceylon. This was submitted with a suggestion that it be cut back but it was too good a read, so is included in full. We also note the 50th anniversaries of both Black Mountain Nature Reserve and the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra.

This issue also includes an article on forest fires taken from *The Conversation* and which continues a theme of our April 2020 issue, two articles from *FACIT News* published by Friends of ACT Trees, and an article on log and timber ready reckoners which was inspired by a chance find. It sounds like a dull topic but was anything but. I hope that it's as interesting to read as it was to research. We also have news on an online conference and a request for information. Finally, Sybil Jack pointed me towards a project being undertaken in Blean Woods in Kent (UK) to reintroduce European Bison in Spring 2022. The species has been extinct in the UK for at least 6000 years and possibly as long as 11,000. Sybil says that Blean Woods is an area she knew well in her youth. We cover the world in this issue!

## JOHN CURTIN, JANUARY 1885-JULY 1945, TIMBER UNION ORGANISER AND PRIME MINISTER

Sunday 5 July 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the death in 1945 of Australia's fourteenth Prime Minister, John Curtin. He had become Prime Minister in October 1941 following the collapse of Arthur Fadden's Coalition Government.<sup>1</sup> Curtin is one of three Prime Ministers to die while in office, the others being Joseph Lyons in 1938 and Harold Holt in 1967.

While Curtin's role as Australia's Prime Minister during WWII is well known, his work as a timber union organiser in the early 20th century is somewhat less so.

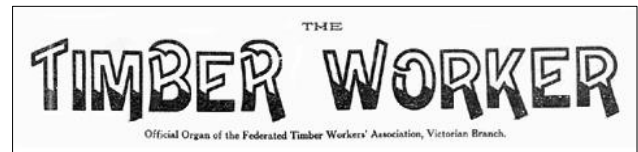
Before entering Parliament, he had a long involvement in the labour movement, including time as the secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Timber Workers' Union from 1911 and as its first federal president from 1914 until 1915 when he resigned due to ill health. He moved to Western Australia shortly afterwards.

David Day has written that "Curtin had come to the Timber Workers' Union in 1911 after nearly a decade of activity within the Melbourne socialist circle. Like many people, Curtin was searching for a cure for society's ills, hoping to harness the prevailing optimism of the age, with its notions of inexorable progress, into an unstoppable revolt against capitalism."<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Serle says that when Curtin became secretary, he "threw himself into consolidating scattered local groups and improving working and accommodation conditions".<sup>3</sup>

While one of Curtin's aims as a union organiser was to promote unity among timber workers, Day notes that "His arguments for union amalgamations went largely unanswered, even within his own union which seemed more concerned with resisting the predatory moves of the Australian Workers' Union than putting an end to what Curtin blasted as 'suicidal sectionalism', with the workers at one timber mill being represented by no less than fourteen different unions".

Curtin was responsible for the introduction of the union newspaper, *The Timber Worker*, which was first published in February 1913 and continued until December 1930. It was a continuation of his earlier writing in publications such as *The Socialist* to which he contributed articles from 1906 to 1909.<sup>4</sup>

Writing about *The Timber Worker*, David Black and Lesley Wallace say that "Curtin was editor of the paper and wrote much of its content. The articles include annual reports and information about wages and conditions as well as many editorials on socialist, union, national, state or local issues."<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Serle calls it "a vehicle of industrial agitation and socialist propaganda".



In April 1913 – not long after it started – the publisher of *The Timber Worker* changed from the Victorian Branch of the Federated Timber Workers' Association to the Victorian Branch of the Amalgamated Timber Workers' Union. A further change took place in July 1918 following the union's deregistration, and it was then published by the Victorian Branch of the Australian Timber Workers' Union.<sup>6,7</sup>

The history of timber unions in this period is difficult to follow. A chart published by the Australian Trade Union Archives lists industrial organisations from the year of their registration under the *Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904*.<sup>8</sup> While the publishing history of *The Timber Worker* suggests that the Federated Timber Workers' Association became the Amalgamated Timber Workers' Union in 1913, the chart says that the immediate predecessor of the Amalgamated Union was the Federated Saw Mill & General Wood Workers Employees Association which was registered under the

<sup>1</sup> Following the federal election in October 1940, Australia had a minority government formed by a coalition of the United Australia Party and the Country Party, with the support of two independents. The government was led by Prime Minister Robert Menzies who resigned in August 1941. The Coalition continued with Arthur Fadden as Prime Minister, despite him being from the Country Party – the junior partner in the Coalition. Fadden's government lasted only 40 days before being defeated on a no confidence motion. The Governor-General, Lord Gowrie, was reluctant to call an election for a Parliament barely a year old, especially given the international situation, and extracted a promise from the two independents that they would support Curtin as Prime Minister for the remainder of the Parliament's term. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940\\_Australian\\_federal\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940_Australian_federal_election), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Curtin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Curtin)

<sup>2</sup> This quote is extracted from a public lecture that David Day delivered in February 1998, but he is also the author of *John Curtin: A life*, published by HarperCollins, Sydney, in 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Serle, 1993. "Curtin, John (1885-1945)". *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 13. Melbourne University Press. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/curtin-john-9885>

<sup>4</sup> John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. The Research Papers of Tom Fitzgerald. <http://john.curtin.edu.au/fitzgerald/collection/socialist.html>

<sup>5</sup> David Black and Lesley Wallace, nd. *Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers: John Curtin 1941-1945*. National Archives of Australia and John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. [www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-02/research-guide-john-curtin.pdf](http://www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-02/research-guide-john-curtin.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Information on the publishers and the publishing history for *The Timber Worker* is sourced from the National Library of Australia's Trove website. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/18981933>

<sup>7</sup> The Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the Australian National University reports that the Amalgamated Timber Workers' Union of Australia was deregistered in 1918 and replaced by the Australian Timber Workers' Union. The new union extended coverage to workers in box and case factories, saw makers' shops, joiners' workshops, carpenters, implement workers and wood working machinists. <http://archivescollection.anu.edu.au/index.php/australian-timber-workers-union-2>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Trade Union Archives. Chart 7 Trade Unions – Building, Construction, Mining & Timber Unions. <http://www.atua.org.au/ptta/028.html>



Act in 1905. This is almost consistent with a short history published by the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU) on its website which says that it was first registered in 1907 as the Federated Sawmill, Timber-yard and Woodworkers Employees Association of Australasia.<sup>9</sup> If the names are correct, the simple answer could be that John Curtin's Federated Association was a separate union which also joined the Amalgamated Union in 1913. Also note that many unions existed well before this. The CFMMEU says that its "history goes back to the 1870's campaign for the 8 hour working day, where it was at the forefront of the campaign".

Curtin's resignation as the union's general secretary and as editor of *The Timber Worker* was published on 23 November 1915:<sup>10</sup>

### John Curtin Resigns.

Comrades, Having terminated my association with the Union as its Gen. Secretary, I wish, more than words can ever convey, to ask your acceptance of my deep gratitude for the loyal co-operation and unswerving confidence received at your hands since March 1, 1911. Whatever has been done in those four and three-quarter years would have been impossible were it not for your great heart and the wonderful unity of purpose which has been its expression.

And, though I say it myself, much has indeed been done: not alone in Victoria, but in all the States, the Union is now far better equipped – and that, surely is our testing gauge – for the task of economic organisation. Apart altogether from the establishing basic minimums, our superior influence in respect to collective bargaining, the added compactness in industrial structure, the appointment of more men to adequately staff the services of propagation and enrolment, as well as the foundation and continuous conduct of the journal in which I now write, there remains, I, am certain, the greater and worthier gain of an awakened and surer understanding of what the movement of Labor essentially consists of.

I leave you now because I feel the circumstances of the time, coupled with my personal inclinations and health, do not permit me at present serving further with advantage to you or satisfaction to myself.

It will not be long now before the tide of socialist agitation flows strongly – even to the flood – and given health and strength, I shall then be found not lacking in determination to again face the stress and storm of trades union responsibility.

Please accept my fraternal greetings and hearty good wishes.

JACK CURTIN.

The letter is followed by a note from the new editor of *The Timber Worker*, R. Bowers.

Curtin continued his involvement in journalism after his move to Western Australia in 1916 where he became editor of the Australian Workers' Union newspaper *Westralian Worker*. He regarded himself as a working journalist and from 1920-25 was the president of the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Journalists' Association.

On a personal level, Curtin's work for the Timber Workers' Union led to him meeting his future wife Elsie Needham. In April 1912, Curtin had travelled to Tasmania to help re-establish the Tasmanian Branch of the union and an acquaintance from the Victorian Socialist Party, Fred Katz, took him to visit Elsie's father Abraham Needham, who had been a Labor Party candidate in the 1912 Tasmanian state election. Curtin proposed to her in 1914 shortly before she left on a family trip to South Africa. They were married in 1917 and had two children.



*The last photo of John and Elsie together in the garden at the Lodge, Canberra, 27 April 1945. Records of the Curtin family. JCPML00376/29*

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<sup>9</sup> CFMEU Manufacturing. "Our History". <https://manufacturing.cfmeu.org.au/our-history>

<sup>10</sup> John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. <http://john.curtin.edu.au/journalist/tw23november1915.html>

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## AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY NETWORK – ON-LINE CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 2020

The ANZEHN is inviting papers for its first online conference which will be held through Zoom over four evenings from 12 to 15 October 2020, from 5-6PM AEDT. The conference will address themes of Recovery, Restoration, Renewal and Resistance.

There will be three presentations on each of the four evenings and it will be live streamed and recorded, and uploaded to the ANZEHN website.

Abstracts of up to 250 words are due by **1 September 2020** and should be sent to Dr Margaret Cook ([mcookhistory@gmail.com](mailto:mcookhistory@gmail.com)).

More information is on the ANZEHN website: [www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2020/07/cfp-inaugural-anzehn-conference-october-2020](http://www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2020/07/cfp-inaugural-anzehn-conference-october-2020).

## BLACK MOUNTAIN NATURE RESERVE AND THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS – 50TH ANNIVERSARIES

Two anniversaries being marked in 2020 are the dedication of Black Mountain Nature Reserve in Canberra on 23 July 1970 and the official opening of the Australian National Botanic Gardens on 20 October 1970 on the south-eastern slope of Black Mountain. At the time, it was the only botanic garden devoted exclusively to Australian flora.

### *Black Mountain Nature Reserve*



To mark the half century, the Friends of Black Mountain are publishing a book titled *Black Mountain: A natural history of a Canberra icon*, written by Ian Fraser and Rosemary Purdie.

This richly illustrated book is a good general read, based on a series of scientific papers prepared by local experts for a 2018 symposium. It

goes to the ecological heart of the mountain – a sandstone island covered in dry sclerophyll forest that is home to over 640 species of native plants, lichens and macrofungi, 174 species of native vertebrate animals, and at least 2150 species of native insects and other invertebrates.

Summarising existing scientific knowledge about the area's biodiversity and ecology, with maps, diagrams and photographs, the book aims to increase understanding and appreciation of the area and help ensure that its values remain intact for future generations.

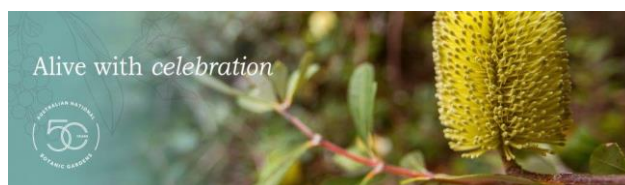
The book can be ordered from the Friends of Black Mountain website –

[friendsofblackmountain.org.au/AnniversaryBook](http://friendsofblackmountain.org.au/AnniversaryBook). The price is \$30 or \$25 for orders placed before 20 August. Postage is \$10 for up to five copies.

### *Australian National Botanic Gardens*

The formal start of the Australian National Botanic Gardens occurred in October 1970 when Prime Minister John Gorton officially opened what was then called Canberra Botanic Gardens. However, its history goes back to the 1930s when Canberra was being planned and a large site for the gardens was subsequently set aside on Black Mountain. In September 1949, the ceremonial planting of the first trees by Prime Minister Ben Chifley and Director of Kew Gardens, Sir Edward Salisbury, took place. The gardens were added to the Commonwealth Heritage List in June 2004.

For more information, see the Parks Australia website at [parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens/50th-anniversary](http://parksaustralia.gov.au/botanic-gardens/50th-anniversary).



## THE BUSINESS OF CHRISTMAS TREES

by Michael Bleby

A head poked around the corner of my office door. "We had better do another run to the bank today – the cash box in the office safe is full again". My forest clerk was referring to the inordinate amount of cash that had built up from the sale of Christmas trees over just the past few days. He always felt more comfortable with someone "riding shot gun" with him on the trip into town to the bank.

The growing and harvesting of Christmas trees was always an interesting and often challenging time as a District Forester. Like firewood and some other minor forest products, the sale of Christmas trees is quite sensitive to the distance from the market. Consequently the business of Christmas trees was only a profitable part of forest management in some locations. It was certainly a significant busy time every December at Mount Crawford in the Mount Lofty Ranges when I was District Forester there in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The market in nearby Adelaide for 2 metre high *Pinus radiata* live Christmas trees was well established. Many people chose to forego the convenience of an artificial tree and preferred a real specimen along with the smell of pine in their living rooms over the Festive Season, despite any mess from needles or resin. The trees we could supply were not the perfectly shaped conical trees produced and manicured by regular trimming and shaping as happens in a specialist Christmas tree farm, but were reasonably shaped naturally grown young pine trees, good enough to do the job.

The main outlet for Christmas trees in those days was through the network of green grocery stores in Adelaide city and suburbs. The market gardeners who took their produce to the East End market in those days would order, pick up and pay for their trees from one of our forest depots.

My gang of forest workers would be dispatched to cut the trees and stack them at the depot ready for collection in their various ordered quantities. It was sometimes difficult to find enough spare labour for this work as it was also a demanding time for things like fire break maintenance and access work in preparation for the Fire Danger Season.

The forest clerk would take the numerous phone call orders and schedule the pick ups of who wanted what and when. This mostly went pretty smoothly. The market gardeners we regularly dealt with were mostly of southern European origin who had emigrated to South Australia from Italy or Greece and brought with them their market gardening expertise.

The prices for Christmas trees were set annually, and the deal was always cash at time of pick up – certainly no credit. This was fine by the market gardeners who were used to and, in fact, preferred to operate in an all cash economy. They would pull out a large roll of notes and hand over the cash each time they did a pick up, hence the need for the trips to the bank to deposit cash on a regular basis.

The pick ups however were often not smooth affairs. Bartering and haggling was an everyday occurrence for these guys. Since the price was pretty fixed, the discount wrangle came in the form of negotiating numbers or more often tree quality. Often the conversation went something like this. "I don't-a want-a buy dis rubbish. Dis is not-a da good Clistmas tee". On one weekend pick up occasion my wife was told at the back door of the house – "The people, they pay a lota money for da lights – day don't-a want-a buy dis rubbish."

There was of course some understandable quality variation and, in attempts to get the desired numbers, the gang would have included some trees of doubtfully acceptable shape. The purchaser however would pick over his pile and keep referring to the worst in the heap.

As public servants, bribery and corruption was never part of our MO, however some healthy negotiation was an expectation of the market gardeners for whom it was normal business practice. "If you give-a me da good Clistmas tees, I give-a you a crate of tomatoes and a crate of da lettuce".

They always did well out of the deals, they always wanted more trees than we could realistically find and deliver, and they always came back the next year.

The 2 metre trees that we harvested for these Christmas tree sales were planted especially 2½ years earlier. We made use of land that might otherwise be standing idle, such as powerline easements that ran through the forest. Trees would be harvested well before reaching any height to trouble the power lines overhead.

Another trick was to double plant two rows either side of internal access tracks. This would result in 1.2m spacing between plantation trees instead of the normal 2.4m in these particular rows. This made for easy access for harvesting by removing alternate stems as Christmas trees, leaving the remainder at normal stocking to grow on through the rotation.

There were several long standing traditions where we supplied gratis Christmas trees to various places and institutions, either because we were a government enterprise, or because we were just being good local corporate citizens. Local churches, schools, kindergartens and main street decorations were often standing deliveries during December. There were two particularly special deliveries in this category. The first was a Christmas tree for Victoria Square in the middle of the city. The Adelaide City Council requirement was for a large tree of good proportions, which required a search in the forest for a 6-8m open grown tree that could be felled and loaded on to the forest tip truck and transported down to the city.

The second special delivery was the Christmas tree for Government House. This involved the selection of a well-shaped tree worthy of the Vice Regal foyer. I recall some competition between our employee truck drivers as to who would be doing the Government House delivery. I later discovered that the gate keeper always invited the driver in for refreshments and also slipped him a box of beer for his troubles.



There was also a long standing annual arrangement at our Kersbrook sub-district depot that a medium size Christmas tree was to be left for pick up at the shed, by a large van for the Ansett Airways Christmas party at Adelaide airport. A carton or two of long neck "Southwark" beer was always left behind the shed door as payment. The Kersbrook gang would enjoy the contents at their own Forest Christmas show.

As far as my own family was concerned, the excursion into the forest to select a suitable tree to decorate was always a highlight. Armed with trimming axe and trailer, we would all venture out and were usually faced with too much choice. "How about this one? – No it's too spindly." "What about this one? – No it's too lopsided" – and so on. Eventually we would either find the perfect tree, or settle for a compromise and set it up within an hour or two in a tub with small rocks and plenty of water. Having a decent drink within a short time of being cut meant that it would invariably stay green and healthy looking for all of the 12 days of the Christmas season. I recall some occasions when our children wanted to set up and decorate their own personal Christmas tree in their bedroom and so we came back to the house with three small neat regeneration trees, as well as the one for the lounge room.

The most challenging Christmas tree situation I remember, involved cutting a very large number of trees unexpectedly in an incredibly short time frame. "Community Aid Abroad" was an organisation that conducted a significant annual fundraiser by taking orders and home delivering Christmas trees across the suburbs of Adelaide on a particular weekend prior to Christmas. For several years they had been sourcing their supply of trees from areas of natural regeneration growing on clear felled plantation land which was between rotations in the vast areas of forest 400km away in the south east of the state. Service club volunteers would assemble and cut the required number of trees for trucking on semi-trailers to the city.

By 1981, the Radiata Pine pest "Sirex Wasp" had arrived in the south east region after its slow westerly spread through the State of Victoria over several decades. Sirex had not yet arrived in the Mount Lofty Ranges Region at that time and local quarantine biosecurity arrangements were put in place to prevent the movement of logs, seedlings, and all live *P. radiata* plant material from the south east so that the insect would not be transported to an uninfected location. This of course affected the movement of Christmas trees and rather suddenly put Community Aid Abroad's big fundraiser in jeopardy for that year. The only supply that was going to be possible would be trees from somewhere in the Mount Lofty Ranges Region.

I was made aware of this dilemma and the fact that it was being discussed at a high level when I received a phone call from my boss, the Regional Forester, to say that his boss, the Conservator, was most concerned that we should be able to assist. The question was – would I be able to supply an additional 5000 trees next Saturday? I knew that our existing promised orders meant that all the

available Christmas tree plantings we could draw from were already committed. I explained our situation and left it at that.

Several hours later the phone rang again. The Regional Forester said to me that the word from the top was simply "Just find them!" So I dutifully complied with the Conservator's wishes and we ended up doing an unconventional early thinning in some steep country that would normally have grown on to produce sawlogs.

Achieving the delivery deadline meant working in the rain, but the gang were certainly happy to do the extra overtime before Christmas. We cut, loaded and stacked the extra 5000 trees using a system of two men on chainsaws, two dragging and loading, with one on the back of the tip truck receiving and stacking for a full load. The trees were then transported to a landing where the semi-trailers could get access to load and depart for the city. It turned out to be a successful production line, we achieved the necessary numbers in the required time frame, and the recipients would have been none the wiser of what lay behind their delivery.

But then it was Christmas – when the extraordinary, can be achieved.



*Trees that have been regularly shaped on a Christmas tree farm.*



*P. radiata at Christmas tree harvest age of 2 1/2.*



*1981 – Loading semi-trailers from the stockpile for Community Aid Abroad.*

## OUR SAVAGE HISTORY OF FIGHTING BUSHFIRES

By Dr Roland Wettenhall, University of Melbourne \*

Too many firefighters have already died during Australia's catastrophic bushfires this summer; a new project is looking back, honouring the stories of historical firefighters who lost their lives.

This Australian summer brought with it devastating bushfires affecting many communities around the country.

In Victoria, the bushfire season is frequently at its peak in February, but this summer has seen severe fires burning out of control much, much earlier.

The hot northerly winds scorched parks and gardens, bringing soaring temperatures which all added to already hazardous conditions, fuelling the bushfires and forcing thousands to flee.

Rural communities in Victoria, with a savage history of catastrophic bushfires, have witnessed volunteers from around the world putting their own lives at risk to save animals, property and human lives.

And the cost of bushfires in terms of human lives can be enormous.

The loss of any life in a bushfire is traumatic but, as has occurred this summer, the death of firefighters always shocks us to the core.

The sacrifice of a life when coming to the aid of others is regarded as one of the most selfless acts of bravery and heroism.

With the fire season still active, Victorians have already honoured some of the firefighters killed as they worked to save bushland, houses and lives – David Moresi, Mat Kavanagh and Bill Slade.

\* This article was first published on *Pursuit*, the University of Melbourne's multi-media platform, showcasing the latest research and opinion from world-leading experts. The original article was first published on 13 February 2020 in the "Humanities" section and is available at <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/our-savage-history-of-fighting-bushfires>.



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The original article includes a banner featuring Geoffrey Bull's Walkley Award winning picture of firefighters in front of an advancing fire at Pantan Hill in 1962. The full picture was published on the front page of Melbourne newspaper *The Sun News Pictorial* on Wednesday 17 January 1962. Later that year, it was named "Best News Picture" in the W.G. Walkley National Award for Australian Journalism. The photo remains in copyright and is not reproduced here, but can be viewed at <http://omeka-s.deakin.edu.au/s/walkleyarchive/item/252>.



The article also includes a link to short film called "Black Sunday" that was used as a promotional fund-raiser film for a bushfire relief fund in 1926. The video is sourced from the National Film and Sound Archive's Australian Screen Online

website and, along with the curator's notes, is available at <https://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/black-sunday>.

Sadly, they are unlikely to be the last to perish – but new research has brought to light some of the stories of Victoria's historical firefighters who lost their lives.

Last year, I began work on a commission from the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to investigate the historical deaths of people who worked for the DELWP and its precursor organisations including contractors and organisations that operated under licences from the Victorian Forestry Commission.

My research, with Professor Andrew May from the (University of Melbourne's) School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, found how whole families in the early twentieth century, children included, perished with the men whose job it was to fight bushfires.

Much like today, a coronial inquest was usually held after a major Victorian bushfire, as well as inquests for individuals who died in workplace accidents. So, my research started with investigating these, often graphic, historical records.

Danger lurks in all forests but falling trees, runaway timber carts, bulldozer accidents and a helicopter accident were all the subject of coronial inquests.

Some accidents were witnessed by other people, others happened on lonely bush tracks with the victims not found until days later.

But bushfires always play a part.

The deadly bushfire days, Black Sunday on 14 February 1926 and Black Friday on 13 January 1939, saw many forestry workers lose their lives, and as we now know, their families with them.



*Many forestry workers lost their lives along with their families who often lived nearby. Picture: Museums Victoria.*

In 1926, Thomas Donald worked as a mill hand at Grant's Mill, near Warburton.

On 14 February that year, devastating fires roared through the Victorian forests, sweeping across Gippsland, the Yarra Valley, the Dandenong Ranges and the Kinglake area.

The fires had started in late January, but wind gusts of up to 97 kilometres per hour led to the fire fronts joining up on 14 February.



Grant's Mill was burned to the ground and Thomas Donald died near the blazing building. Tragically, his wife Mabel Donald, perished along with their three little ones, William aged six, Leslie aged four and Jack aged three.

On the same day, over the mountain range at Gilderoy, Worrley's Mill was similarly consumed.

Forty-five minutes after sitting down for a midday meal, the fire forced everyone to flee. Mill worker Edgar Walker's body was found along a timber tramline; huddled nearby was the body of his wife Ivy trying to protect her children, Albert aged four and Kenneth, just three.

Unlike many bushfire deaths, it is the fact that whole families died at a place of work that sets these tragedies apart.



*The Victorian town of Omeo was badly damaged in the 1939 fires. Picture: Museums Victoria.*

Timber working contractors were not drive-in, drive-out workers – roads and vehicles were much too rudimentary. Workers frequently lived at the mills and raised their families under the towering trunks of the forest giants of the mountain ash.

In 1939, after several years of drought, Victoria was hit by high temperatures and strong winds. Several fires had been burning since late December, but in January, the extreme conditions turned the blazes into a massive fire front.

Towns were burnt to the ground, and 75 percent of the state was covered in smoke.

Five years after Black Friday, in January 1944, bushfires again devastated Victoria with 19 lives lost and over 500 homes destroyed.

But in a sobering reminder that bushfires can strike anywhere, a devastating bushfire raged through the Melbourne seaside suburbs of Cheltenham and Beaumaris.

In scenes reminiscent of seaside Mallacoota in January 2020, hundreds of people evacuated to Beaumaris Beach and Ricketts Point.

Images of war, so frequent on the front page of the papers at that time, gave way to images of horror and

destruction with the house losses varying from 58 to 100 homes in the wider area.

As a result of my research, 19 names of workers of contractors and the state workers who died fighting bushfires in the Victorian Forestry Commission forests are now being put forward for inclusion on the Honour Roll at the National Emergency Services Memorial which sits overlooking Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra.

A further 65 names of people who died were highlighted by the research, irrespective of the nature of the workplace accident, for consideration to be memorialised at one of the DELWP offices in Victoria.

Sadly, the list of names continues to increase.

Bushfires are tragically fought by families, neighbours, volunteers, and professional firefighters, all risking their lives. Facing a wall of roaring flames is a terrifying prospect, too often with the direst consequences.

The deaths of these individuals must be honoured as continual reminders of the fragility of the human condition against nature, but also of the heroism that is often remembered posthumously.

#### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: WILLIAM HENRY SKINNER, GIPPSLAND FORESTRY, 1850S**

Lesley Burgoyne is undertaking some family history research and is seeking information on William Henry Skinner who, according to family lore, was "big" in forestry in Gippsland after 1854.

Lesley says that "William Henry Skinner was on the same ship as my great grandfather, William Barber, landing in Adelaide in 1850. Both of them were in Collingwood in Melbourne on 17 September 1854 when Barber bought a bay horse for £100. Skinner witnessed the transaction." The receipt is included among papers that the family has of her great grandfather's early days carting to the goldfields. So there is evidence that William Henry Skinner existed.

Skinner is reputed to have been a lifelong friend of Barber, and gave him two fiddleback rulers. The story also goes that Barber named a daughter after one of Skinner's daughters.

Lesley writes that "My mother always said Skinner's Christian name was Robert, but research does not reveal this. I am aware of the next generation of a Skinner family being well known in forestry, i.e. Robert Macey Skinner and his brother Ernest John and I have their ancestry. There is no William Henry Skinner to link into that family. Robert and Ernest's father was John and there was an uncle Robert and that may be where the mistake was made. **My question is whether there was a William Henry Skinner known in Gippsland forestry after 1850 until about 1890?**

If you can help, please e-mail the newsletter at [Fintan.OLaighin@awe.gov.au](mailto:Fintan.OLaighin@awe.gov.au) and responses will be forwarded to Lesley.

## THE HISTORY OF D2434 *EUCALYPTUS DEBEUZEVILLEI*

By John Lyons \*

Amongst the many interesting specimens salvaged by Ian McLaughlin and other IWCS † members a decade ago from the CSIRO Dadswell Collection is a very unassuming looking back sawn pale ash Eucalypt labelled D2434. Ian inscribed this as *Enc. de-beuzevillei* and it was purchased by Keith Towe in 2012. Keith subsequently labelled this with the common name Giant Snow Gum, (which as we shall see later is overly optimistic). I purchased this specimen along with all of Keith's collection a couple of years later and hadn't given it much thought until Jim Schubert provided me with a microscope slide of his Dadswell samples including D2434 prepared in April 2019.



The species is named in honour of W A W de Beuzeville who had collected the botanical type specimen in 1919 and provided it to Maiden at the Sydney Herbarium. Maiden described it in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW in 1920 and so it became known officially as *Eucalyptus debeuzevillei* Maiden. He wrote that the type was collected from Jounama Peaks, NSW by Wilfred Alexander Watt de Beuzeville, Assistant Forester, Forestry Commission, December 1919. Interestingly the Australian Plant Name Index <sup>1</sup> in a bracketed entry after the botanical name says Maiden named this *de-Benzevillei* but presumably Botanical nomenclature overruled the author and the hyphen and the capital were subsequently removed.

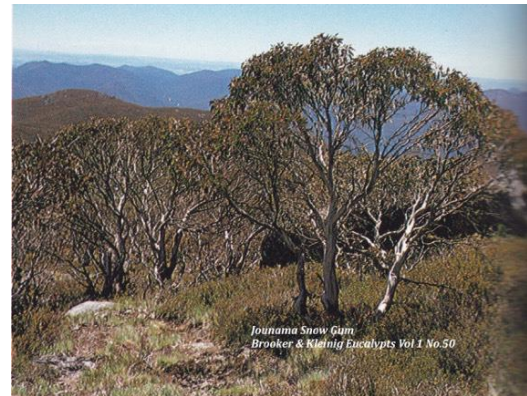
The more widely accepted common name <sup>2</sup> for the species has become Jounama Snow Gum. It grows on steep slopes over 1500 m in the Brindabellas and the Bogong Peaks of the ACT and NSW, above the upper limits of Alpine Ash (*E. delegatensis*). It is hard to imagine

\* This article was originally published by Friends of ACT Trees in the June 2020 issue of its monthly newsletter, *FACTT News*. It is reprinted with permission of the editor Steve Thomas and the author. More information on FACTT, including all editions of its newsletter, is at

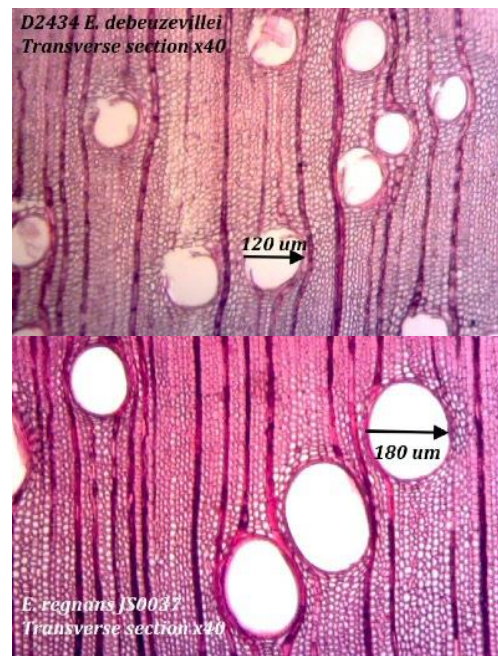
<https://sites.google.com/site/factacanberra>.

† International Wood Collectors Society  
[www.woodcollectors.org](http://www.woodcollectors.org).

anyone has commercialised the harvesting and milling of this species. Chippendale <sup>3</sup> commented "this is usually a small tree with a very short bole or a many-stemmed shrub", so not really a "Giant" after all.



Time has been unkind to the status of this species. It is currently classified as a subspecies of Snow Gum *E. pauciflora*, and SA member David Kleinig <sup>4</sup> gives its botanical name as *Eucalyptus pauciflora* Sieb. ex Spreng. subsp. *debeuzevillei* (Maiden) L. Johnson & D. Blaxell. The Snow Gum type was collected in 1823 by the Czech botanist F W Sieber during a seven-month visit to Australia, and although named in a publication, it was insufficient to satisfy botanical rules until validly published by Sprengel in 1827. This wouldn't have mattered to the Jounama Snow Gum until Laurie Johnson revised the species complex in 1973, relegating the Jounama to a subspecies.



Jim's slide of *E. debeuzevillei* (top) is comparable to *E. regnans*, Mountain Ash (bottom), with no soft tissue, thin rays, relatively open fibres and perhaps a tendency to oblique flares of pores. The notable difference is the typical pore diameter is about half that of *E. regnans*.

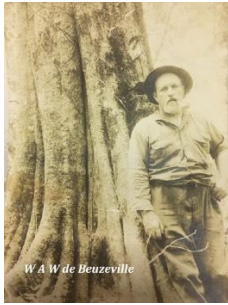
<sup>1</sup> Australian Plant Name Index D-J, Commonwealth of Australia 1991, p1225.

<sup>2</sup> Hall & Brooker, Forest Tree Leaflet 125, Forestry & Timber Bureau, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Chippendale in Kelly, *Eucalypts Volume II*, Thomas Nelson Aust, 1978, p48.

<sup>4</sup> Brooker & Kleinig, *Field Guide to Eucalypts Vol 1*, Inkata, 1983, p92.





De Beuzeville<sup>5</sup> (1884-1954) was born in the Southern Highlands of NSW and educated at Tumut before marrying in 1907 and working on the land. He joined the Forestry Commission in 1912 and worked in various locations around the state before settling in Tumbarumba and Tumut during the 1920s.

From 1930 to 1935 he collected extensively for Maiden at the National Herbarium in Sydney and for Dadswell's group at the CSIR (as CSIRO was known then) Division of Forest Products in Melbourne. According to the CSIR logs, by the end of 1935 he had provided 1048 specimens for Dadswell's group out of the entire collection of 3374 specimens, almost a third of the collection! Dadswell's group began logging samples in December 1928 and had reached 1431 by the time de Beuzeville started in November of 1930. He sent 56 shipments, almost one a month, averaging 20 samples per shipment for the next five years, which was well over half the samples received during this period.

In 1936 de Beuzeville shifted to Sydney and carried out a series of senior roles including establishing the forest ecology branch of the Forestry Commission before retiring in 1948. Despite this being at the very end of his career, both Hall and Chippendale single him out as a "Forest Ecologist"; indeed Chippendale says he was "a keen collector of forest botanical material and the first to recognize Jounama Snow Gum as differing from *E. pauciflora* subsp. *pauciflora*".

When cataloguing Jim's slide, I cross referenced it with the CSIR log books from 1933 to discover that it had been collected by "W A W de B" from the NSW Southern Highlands. Of course "W A W de B" is Wilfred Alexander Watt de Beuzeville. The wood we now have was collected and despatched to Dadswell's group by de Beuzeville himself, a decade after he had collected and introduced the species to the botanical world. Now that makes it pretty special in my book.

The extract of the CSIR logs for *E. de Beuzevillei* samples 2433 & 2434 show hand written notes "BH, BS, limb, TC, bark, mus".

<i>E. de Beuzevillei</i>	636	BH Bark	2424
<i>E. robertsoni</i>	637	BS TC, mus.	2425
<i>E. de Beuzevillei</i>	638	BH bark	2426
<i>E. robertsoni</i>	639	BS TC	2427
<i>E. de Beuzevillei</i>	640	BH limb	2428
<i>E. camphora</i>	641	BS TC, mus	2429
<i>E. camphora</i>	642	BH TC, limb	2430
<i>E. camphora</i>	643	BS bark	2431
<i>E. robertsoni</i>	644	BH TC	2432
<i>E. de Beuzevillei</i>	645	BS limb	2433
<i>E. de Beuzevillei</i>	646	BS bark, mus.	2434

<i>E. de Beuzevillei</i>	645	BH limb
<i>E. de Beuzevillei</i>	646	BS bark, mus.

I think the BS refers to "botanical specimens" and "mus" refers to "Museum" meaning samples of leaves, flowers and fruit were provided to the Sydney Herbarium to confirm the species identity.

Throughout the logs, de Beuzeville's specimens were routinely described with these abbreviations and often the pages were overwritten with comments attributed to the Government Botanist, usually confirming de Beuzeville's identification. That makes them pretty much the same as vouchering the samples and makes them prized items for us as wood collectors.

## COTTER ROAD PLOT AND RARE PINES \*

By John Turnbull

The Cotter Road Plot on the north side of the Cotter Road was established as an experimental area in the mid-1950s to enable the Parks and Gardens Section of the Department of the Interior to conduct research to support landscape development and management in the ACT. Many species of trees and grasses were planted and evaluated until about 1990. There has been virtually no management since that time. A planting assessment made by Robert Boden in 1996 concluded the area had heritage value and scientific significance derived from tree and shrub plantings of considerable botanical and horticultural value. His recommendations were not implemented.

Some rare and unusual tree species remain on the site despite the lack of maintenance and losses due to droughts and bushfires. Many FACTT members will be familiar with the large plot of Torrey pine (*Pinus torreyana*) grown from seed collected from the 1915 planting adjacent to Yarralumla nursery. Less known are smaller plantings of the Eldarica pine (*P. eldarica*) and Chilgoza pine (*P. gerardiana*).

***Pinus eldarica*.** This species is known by the common name Eldarica pine and sometimes as Afghanistan pine. Taxonomically, it is in the *Pinus halepensis/brutia* group of pines. Some classifications refer to Eldarica pine as a separate species while others consider it to be a *P. brutia* subspecies. *P. brutia* ssp. *eldarica* occurs in two areas, in the mountains of Kurdistan in Iraq and in the foothills of the Lower Caucasus in Azerbaijan and Georgia (Farjon and Filer 2013).

The IUCN Red List (2013) records only one occurrence in Azerbaijan at 400-600 m and lists it as "near threatened".

Eldarica pine is reported as a medium-sized tree reaching 15-25 m tall. It has a thick and deeply fissured basal bark and thin and flaky bark in the upper crown. The green needles are slender and in pairs. The cones are stout and heavy.

\* This article was originally published by Friends of ACT Trees in the June 2020 issue of its monthly newsletter, *FACTT News*. It is reprinted with permission of the editor Steve Thomas and the author. More information on FACTT, including all editions of its newsletter, is at <https://sites.google.com/site/factacanberra>.

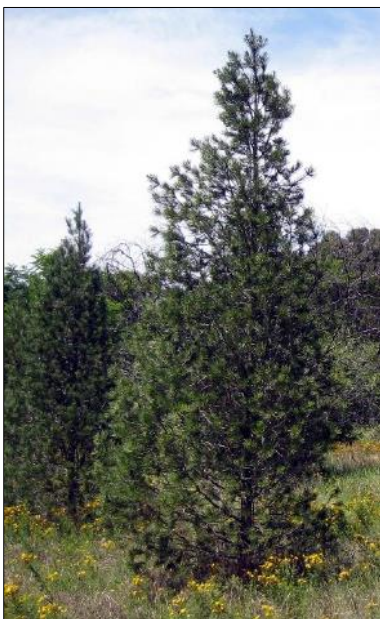
<sup>5</sup> Carron, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 8, MUP, 1981.





In 1968 I was in the Genetics Section of the Forest Research Institute (FRI) assembling seeds to include in an arboretum to be established in a semi-arid area of New South Wales. FRI was providing eucalypt seeds for research in Iran and Dr V. Tregubov, Project Manager of an FAO Mission in Iran, drew my attention to a pine, *P. eldarica*, that was being extensively planted as an exotic on the Iranian plateau and around Teheran. The sites had hot summers and cold winters. Annual rainfall on the plateau was 300-400 mm and around Teheran only 200 mm (Turnbull 1968). He suggested *P. eldarica* might be useful in Australia and sent me a small quantity of seeds.

As part of the arboretum, I was planning an extensive provenance trial of *P. halepensis* and *P. brutia* and included *P. eldarica* in the *P. brutia* trial. We secured a planting site on sheep property of the McCaughey Memorial Institute at Jerilderie in southern New South Wales and planted 18 provenances of *P. brutia* including *P. eldarica*. This trial still exists and has been reported on by Palmberg (1975), Spencer (1985) and Thomas and Borough (1997).



In the United States it is a popular ornamental tree extensively planted in parks and gardens in hot dry areas of southern and southwestern states where its considerable heat and drought tolerance is highly valued. There it is reported to grow at an average rate in excess of 1 metre per year and to produce seed within 5 years

(Phillips and Gladfelter 1991). In 2008, Forest and Wood Products Australia identified it as a species of potential interest for marginal, low-rainfall zones in Australia. But I am not aware that it has been further trialled.

*Pinus gerardiana*, known as Chilgoza pine or Gerard's pine, is native to the northwestern Himalayas in eastern Afghanistan, Pakistan and northwest India growing at elevations between 2000-3350 m. It often occurs in association with Blue pine (*P. wallichiana*) and Deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*). In the IUCN Red List this species is listed as medium risk "near threatened" due to overcutting, and intensive grazing causing poor regeneration. The scientific name commemorates Captain Gerard, a British Army officer in India.

In native stands, it grows to 10-20 m tall usually with a deep crown. The trees in the Cotter Road Plot have a very attractive shape and have flaky bark, peeling to reveal light greyish-green patches, similar to the closely related Lacebark pine (*P. bungeana*). The needle-like leaves, in fascicles of 3, with blue-green stomatal lines on the inner face; the sheaths falling in the first year. The Cotter Road Plot trees are producing cones with thin-shelled seeds that are attractive to cockatoos and parrots. Chilgoza pine is well known for its edible seeds which are an important cash crop for local people in parts of Pakistan and India.

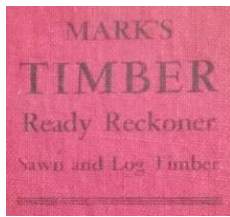
*P. gerardiana* was included in arboretum 8 in Blue Range, ACT in 1948 but the trees were illegally removed, probably for Christmas trees. Like *P. eldarica*, it is rarely planted in Australia.

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## LOG AND TIMBER READY RECKONERS

by Fintán Ó Laighin



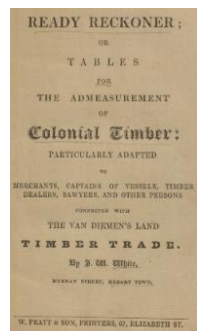
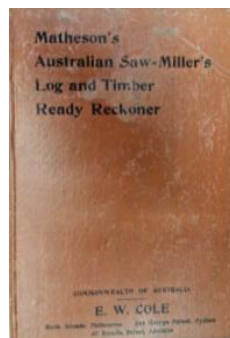
Here is a book that caught the eye of Mark Edwards – a friend, former colleague and retired forester – when he was browsing at an antique market in the Canberra suburb of Fyshwick – an early edition of *Mark's Timber*

*Ready Reckoner* published by E.W. Cole of Melbourne. It's described as "comprising useful tables for the measurement of sawn and log timber".

An entry for *Mark's Timber Ready Reckoner* on the Trove website of the National Library of Australia says that E.W. Cole published its first edition in 1900 and continued doing so until 1966. However, the State Library of New South Wales holds an edition published in 1882 by Launceston firm Hudson & Hopwood.

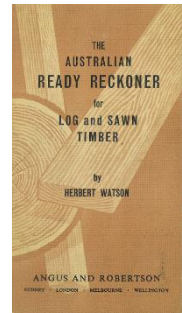
For a few years, *Mark's Timber Ready Reckoner* was published by another Melbourne company, George Robertson<sup>1</sup> and Co., which issued at least three editions – in 1906 (4th edition), 1910 (6th) and 1914 (9th) – although by 1920 it was again being published by E.W. Cole when the 14th edition was released. The library records are incomplete, and Cole may have been publishing it before this.

E.W. Cole concurrently published *Matheson's Australian Saw-Miller's Log and Timber Ready Reckoner*, which was an illustrated edition "compiled especially to meet the requirements of Australian bush saw-millers". The NLA lists editions published in 1900 and 1910, credited to "D. Matheson (compiler)", as well as a 1974 edition by Gary Waugh in collaboration with Jack Newey and John Wright and titled *Matheson's Australian saw-millers' log and timber ready reckoner: giving true log volume in cubic metres and boxed heart allowance*. The 1910 edition was also published in London by Crosby Lockwood & Son.



Perhaps the earliest timber ready reckoner published in Australia was one by J.W. White of Hobart Town which appeared in about 1847 titled *Ready reckoner; or Tables for the admeasurement of Colonial Timber: particularly adapted to merchants, captains of vessels, timber dealers, sawyers, and other persons connected with the Van Diemen's Land timber trade*.

Another Australian edition first appeared in 1946 (and reprinted at least six times), authored by Herbert Watson. It was published by Angus and Robertson in Sydney and titled *The Australian ready reckoner for log and sawn timber*. In the foreword to the 1959 reprint (pictured), the author writes that:



"This book has been compiled for the Australian Timber Trade, and contains most useful information to all Timber Dealers, Bush Workers, Teamsters, and other people interested in the Timber Trade generally."

### SUPERFICIAL CONTENTS OF ROUND TIMBER

Circumference of Log

Len. Log (ft.)	2' 0"	2' 1"	2' 2"	2' 3"	2' 4"	2' 5"
7	21	23	25	26	29	31
8	24	26	28	30	33	35
9	27	29	32	34	37	39
10	30	32	35	38	41	44
11	33	36	39	42	45	48
12	36	39	42	45	49	52
13	39	42	46	49	53	57
14	42	45	49	53	57	61
15	45	49	53	57	61	66
16	48	52	56	61	65	70
17	51	55	60	64	69	74
18	54	59	63	68	73	79
19	57	62	67	72	78	83
20	60	65	70	76	82	88
21	63	68	74	80	86	92
22	66	72	77	83	90	96
23	69	75	81	87	94	101
24	72	78	84	91	98	105
25	75	81	88	95	102	109
26	78	85	91	99	106	114
27	81	88	95	102	110	118
28	84	91	99	106	114	123
29	87	94	102	110	118	127
30	90	98	106	114	122	131
31	93	101	109	118	127	136

All measurements shown to nearest six inches

29

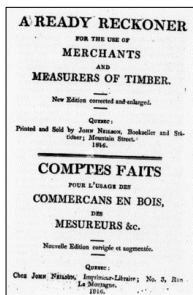
An example of a page from a timber ready reckoner, in this case the 1959 edition of Herbert Watson's *The Australian ready reckoner for log and sawn timber*.

<sup>1</sup> This is not the same George Robertson who was one of the founders of Angus and Robertson, although they were contemporaries. While they were not related, the George Robertson who went on to establish A&R once worked for George Robertson & Co. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Robertson\\_\(bookseller\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Robertson_(bookseller)) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Robertson\\_\(publisher\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Robertson_(publisher)).



Wiktionary defines "ready reckoner" as "a printed book or table containing precalculated values, often multiples of given amounts." In a 2005 article, Bruce Williams and Roger Johnson write that "The term 'Ready Reckoner', according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was first used by Daniel Fenning in 1757 as the title of his publication 'The Ready Reckoner; or Trader's Most Useful Assistant'." <sup>2</sup> However, Williams and Johnson note that "there were a number of earlier books of a similar nature" and that the concept can be traced back to Flemish mathematician, physicist and military engineer Simon Stevin in 1585.

Ready reckoners for timber were published in a number of different countries, sometimes as stand-alone volumes, and sometimes as part of a compendium that covered more than just timber. Many of them were published in the 19th century, with updated editions continuing well into the 20th.



An early edition was published in 1809 by John Nielsen, Bookseller and Stationer of Quebec, titled *A ready reckoner for the use of dealers in timber and others*. In 1816, he published a "New Edition corrected and enlarged" with the title *A Ready Reckoner for the Use of Merchants and Measurers of Timber*. It went through a number of reprints and updates.

There seems to have been a thriving market for ready reckoners. Nielsen also published another book in 1809 titled *Ready Reckoner; Shewing the proportion which Staves of various dimensions bear, to the Standard of 5½ Feet by 1½ Inches*, written by Thos. McKie, Culler. <sup>3</sup>

An undated publication written by Frank Freese, a statistician with the US Forest Service, documents the proliferation of log measurement systems. He notes in the introduction:

"Historically the lumber industry has consisted of a number of independent marketing areas or even of separate companies. Since no industrial organization or government agency had control over the measurement of logs, each district or even individual buyers could devise a rule to fit a particular set of operating conditions. The result is that in the United States and Canada there are over 95 recognized rules bearing about 185 names. In addition, there are numerous local variations in the application of any given rule." <sup>4</sup>

Section I (pp9-40) of the book contains "the log rules used in United States and Canada ... listed and described in alphabetic order". Freese includes many variants of a name, such as the "Adirondack Standard (which) was also called the Adirondack Market, Dimick Standard, Glens Falls Standard, and Nineteen-Inch Standard". Section II (pp41-49) is a list of "Some Volume Formulae, Lumber Measures, and Foreign Log Rules".

The differences and confusion that arise between log measurement systems and, by extension, ready reckoners, are summed up by a passage on p18:

"After the Scribner Rule was introduced in 1846, it largely supplanted the less reliable Doyle. However, as Belyea <sup>5</sup> has shown, a rather odd turn of events resurrected that 'hoary old sinner of a log rule.' Some time around 1872 to 1875, J.M. Scribner sold the copyrights and rights of royalty for his original work to the publisher George W. Fisher. Prior to this Fisher had also acquired the copyright and stereotype plates of Doyle's Ready Reckoner. Then in 1876 Fisher published 'Scribner's Lumber and Log Book' which was nearly identical to the original Scribner publication even to the extent of listing Scribner as the author, But, in place of the Scribner Rule there was a table of values identical to the Doyle Rule which had been out of print for over 20 years. Because of this publication, the Doyle Rule was often referred to as the New Scribner Rule or, more simply, the New Rule."

Other ready reckoners listed by Freese are the *American Lumberman Vest Pocket Ready Reckoner* (p34) and *Matheson's Australian Sawmiller's Log and Timber Ready-Reckoner* (p45).

To finish this article, short lists of timber ready reckoners published in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and the USA are below. The lists are by no means exhaustive, and focus on 19th century and early 20th century editions, with a few later Australian and New Zealand editions. In each list, they are ordered by year of publication.

#### Australia

J.W. White, c.1847. *Ready reckoner; or Tables for the admeasurement of Colonial Timber: particularly adapted to merchants, captains of vessels, timber dealers, sawyers, and other persons connected with the Van Diemen's Land timber trade*. J.W. White, Hobart Town. <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-486158394> (The State Library of Tasmania gives the publication date as 1848 or 1850.)

<sup>2</sup> The third edition, published in 1865, refers to "additions on board and timber measure". <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4879640>

<sup>3</sup> A "culler", according to the *Cullers Act* of Quebec, is a "person who measures timber ... including cross cut trees, lopped trees, trees with no crown or trees reduced to chips" <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/pdf/cs/M-12.1.pdf>. This Act remains in force. In April 1808, the provincial parliament of Lower-Canada passed "An Act for the better regulation of the Lumber Trade" which provided for the appointment of master cullers and measurers. [https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9\\_00926\\_17](https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_00926_17) (p460 & p462). James Elliott Defebaugh discusses the law in his *History of the Lumber Industry of America, Volume 1* (p105).

<sup>4</sup> Frank Freese, nd. *A Collection of Log Rules*. U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory Madison, WIS, p1. <https://www.fpl.fs.fed.us/documnts/fplgtr/fplgtr01.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> This is a reference to Harold C. Belyea who is one of a number of authors cited by Freese. In the introduction (p2), he writes that "Most of the information was obtained from over 200 references listed in the Appendix, with the bulk of it attributable to the writings of H.C. Belyea, Austin Cary, H.H. Chapman, H.S. Graves, H.E. McKenzie, and J.M. Robinson. Although log rules are no longer as big an issue as they once were, they are an important element in the history of forestry and the lumbering industry and it seemed desirable to bring together under one cover, all of the material that had been accumulated."



- ns, 1882. *Mark's Timber Ready Reckoner: comprising useful tables for the measurement of sawn and log timber*. Hudson & Hopwood, Launceston.
- D. Matheson (compiler), 1900. *Matheson's Australian saw-millers' log and timber ready reckoner: giving true log volume in cubic metres and boxed heart allowance*. E.W. Cole, Melbourne. (The 1910 edition was published by both E.W. Cole [Melbourne] and Crosby Lockwood & Son [London].)
- ns, 1900. *Mark's Timber Ready Reckoner*. E.W. Cole, Melbourne. (Cole published a number of subsequent editions, including in 1920 [14th]. The NLA catalogue refers to 1800-1966 but doesn't provide details.)
- ns, 1906. *Mark's Timber Ready Reckoner*. 4th edition. George Robertson and Co., Melbourne. (Robertson published a number of subsequent editions, including in 1910 [6th] and 1914 [9th].)
- Herbert Watson, 1946. *The Australian ready reckoner for log and sawn timber*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney. (It was reprinted at least six times – in 1948, 1950, 1951, 1955, 1959 and 1965.)
- Gary Waugh, 1974. *Matheson's Australian saw-millers' log and timber ready reckoner: giving true log volume in cubic metres and boxed heart allowance*. Cole Publications, Melbourne. Written in collaboration with Jack Newey and John Wright.

### New Zealand

- Haakon Dahl, c.1890s. *New Ready Reckoner for Round Timber, Giving Measurements of Round Logs, varying from 3ft to 30ft in length, and from 2ft to 16ft in girth. It also includes a Wages Table and Table for Cross Cutters, Contractors, etc*. Wildman & Lyell, Auckland.
- Thomas Bain, 1904. *The ready reckoner for sawn timber (true to name): quantities and prices: containing 184,170 calculations*. 1st edition. Otago Daily Times, Dunedin.
- Haakon Dahl, 1905. *Ready reckoner for finding the superficial measurement of sawn timber, with tables for telegraph poles and piles*. Wildman & Arey, Auckland.
- Haakon Dahl, 1921. *Ready reckoner for round timber: short and long lengths, wages tables, table for cross-cutters, contractors, etc*. 6th edition. Wildman & Arey, Auckland.
- Haakon Dahl, 1940. *Ready reckoner for finding the superficial measurement of sawn timber, with tables for telegraph poles and piles*. J.H. Bigelow, Auckland.
- Haakon Dahl, 1940. *Ready reckoner for round timber: short and long lengths, table for cross-cutters, contractors, etc*. 12th edition. J.H. Bigelow, Auckland.
- Haakon Dahl, c.1960s. *Ready reckoner for round timber, short and long lengths: short and long lengths table for cross-cutters, contractors, etc*. 22nd edition. J.H. Bigelow, Auckland.
- W.G. (Dooler) Johnston, 1974. *Dooler's ready reckoner of timber decimal equivalents: 11,520 ready worked out decimal equivalents for all sizes of timber, rough sawn, dressed lines, mouldings and joinery*. W.G. Johnston, Rotorua.

### United Kingdom

- Forestry Commission, nd. *Timber Ready Reckoner*.
- ns, 1909. *The "Ideal" Timber Ready Reckoner*. F. Chapman & Co, Walthamstow.
- Fred Patchett, 1909. *Timber Ready Reckoner*.
- E. Prince and H. Prince, 1922. *The "Prince" Timber Ready Reckoner*. H. Davies & Co, Manchester. (Further editions were published by Ernest Benn [London] in 1947, 1950 (a

new edition, thoroughly revised), and 1971 (a metric edition compiled by James Stanley Baker – also published by Benn Brothers in 1971 and 1973).

- Alfred F. Hart, 1926. *"Hart" Timber Ready Reckoner*. A. Brown & Sons, London.

### Canada

- John Nielsen, 1809. *A ready reckoner for the use of dealers in timber and others*. John Nielsen, Bookseller and Stationer, Quebec.
- John Nielsen, 1816. *A Ready Reckoner for the Use of Merchants and Measurers of Timber. / Comptes faits pour l'usage des commerçans en bois, des mesureurs &c*. Quebec.  
<https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.50497>
- Thomas MacKie, 1826. *The Culler's assistant or Lumber ready reckoner shewing at one view the solid contents of any piece of squared timber to which are added tables for reducing staves to standard. also for planks or deals*. Publisher not stated, Quebec.
- FX Paradis, 1830. *Ready reckoner for the use of merchants, masters of ships and measurers of timber: comprising square and round timber of all dimensions reduced to cubic contents, deals and staves reduced to Quebec standard, and the superficial or flat measure of planks, boards, &c., with several useful comparative results respecting lumber. New edition, corrected and much enlarged*. Publisher not stated, Quebec.
- FX Paradis, 1837. *New ready reckoner: for the use of merchants, masters of ships and measurers of timber: comprising deals and staves of all sizes, reduced to Quebec standard, with several useful comparative results respecting lumber*. W. Cowan, Quebec.
- Edward Doyle, 1853. *Doyle's pocket ready reckoner for timber, plank, boards, saw-logs, wages, board and 6 and 7 per cent interest tables. Revised and improved edition*. T. Maclear, Toronto.
- John Quinn, 1860. *Tables, or, Ready reckoner: shewing cubic contents of octagonal or many timber*. Publisher not stated, Quebec.
- Francis Cusson, 1868. *Cullers and lumber merchants' pocket ready reckoner: containing accurate tables consisting of a correct measurement of square timber; cubical contents of round timber; log reduced to 21 inches standard log; round timber reduced to board measure when sawn*. 3rd edition. R. Miller, Montreal.
- Pierre Miller, 1869. *Ready reckoner for the use of lumber merchants, measurers of timber, shipbuilders, cabinet-makers, sawyers, &c*. Publisher not stated, Quebec.
- J.M. Scribner, c.1880s. *Scribner's Lumber & Log Book; for Ship Builders, Boat Builders, Lumber Merchants, Farmers and Mechanics. Being a Correct Measurement of Scantling, Boards, Plank, Cubical Contents of Square and Round Timber, Saw Logs, by Doyle's Rule; Stave and Heading Bolts, Wood, Tables of Wages by the Month, Board or Rent by the Week or Day, Capacity of Cisterns, Interest Tables, etc. Revised, Enlarged, and Improved, Daniel Marsh, Civil Engineer*. The Toronto News Company, Toronto.

### United States of America

- ns, 1818. *The Ready reckoner, for timber and board measure*. Christian Brown, New York.
- David A. Daboll, 1863. *Daboll's Ready Reckoner. For Ship Builders, & All Persons Who Buy, Sell, or Measure Timber. Being Tables Calculated to Show the Quantity Contained in Any Stick of Sided, Equal Sided, Square, or Round Timber*. David A. Daboll, Center Groton, Connecticut.

- B.H. Day, 1866. *Day's American Ready Reckoner: containing tables for rapid calculations of Aggregate values, wages, salaries, board, interest money, timber, plank, wood, and land measurements with explanations of the proper methods of reckoning them and simple rules for measuring land*. Dick & Fitzgerald, New York City. (Updated editions were published, including in 1880 by Wm. Bryce.)
- J.S Hanna, 1871. *Hanna's Complete Ready Reckoner and Log, Table and Form Book*. 3rd edition. Philadelphia.
- Oliver Byrne, 1878. *Byrne's Timber and Log Book, Ready Reckoner and Price Book*. American News Company, New York.
- ns, 1881. *The Improved Ready Reckoner, Form & Log Book, containing Tables Showing the Amount & Value of any Quantity of Merchandise at any Price from a Quarter of a Cent to Ten Dollars, either by Weight or Measure; Tables of Wages & Board by the Day, Week & Month; Board, Scantling & Plank Measure; Cubic Measurement of Timber; Log Measure; Weight of Grain per Bushel; Interest Tables, Interest Laws of the Different States. Business Law in Daily Use, Business Forms, &c.* Porter & Coates of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (Subsequent editions were published, including in 1940 by the John C. Winston Co., also of Philadelphia.)
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### FIGHTING OVER THE FORESTS

Historian Ian Watson has turned his 1990 book, *Fighting over the Forests*, into an e-book. Published originally by Allen & Unwin, it can be downloaded for free at [ianwatson.com.au/pubs/FightingOverTheForests\\_eReader.pdf](http://ianwatson.com.au/pubs/FightingOverTheForests_eReader.pdf). The Overview states:

For the past decade, environmental politics in Australia has been dominated by conflicts between timber workers and conservationists. Terania Creek, on the north coast of New South Wales, was the scene of one of the earliest and most bitter confrontations. The acrimony aroused and the gulf which separated the protagonists persists to this day. Is such conflict inevitable? Can common ground be found between these two warring camps? In seeking answers to such questions, Ian Watson draws on the words of over 50 conservationists, timber workers and foresters – ordinary people caught up in a dramatic environmental struggle. FIGHTING OVER THE FORESTS offers insights which illuminate many of the current forest controversies and seeks to advance the debate on this enduring dilemma.

## OWEN JONES: AN ASSISTANT CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS IN CEYLON, 1912-1917

By Michael Roche \*

### Introduction

Owen Jones BA (Natural Sciences) and Diploma of Forestry (Oxford) was the inaugural chair of the Forests Commission of Victoria (1920-1925) and subsequently Forestry Superintendent for New Zealand Perpetual Forests, the leading afforestation company in that country at the time. He was over many years a strong supporter of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters.<sup>1</sup> Jones' career began, however, in Ceylon where he was appointed as an Assistant Conservator in 1911. He left to join what became the Royal Flying Corps in 1917 and, newly married, never took up the option of continuing in Ceylon but instead sailed for Australia in 1919. Jones left few details about his work in Ceylon yet, arguably, it is useful to try and reimagine the forestry scene that greeted him when he arrived in 1912. This is the place where he first put into play his professional training and this arguably shaped some of the later forestry impasses in which he found himself in both Victoria and New Zealand. In this respect Jones offers a parallel case to that of C.E. Lane Poole who graduated from Nancy and worked as a colonial forester in Sierra Leone before coming to Western Australia (Dargavel, 2008). Some of the difficulties that both Lane Poole and Jones faced might be attributed to their (very different) personalities, but that is only a partial answer for British colonial forestry depending as it did on German and French practices, modified by experiences in India, that were not easily applicable in Australia or New Zealand of the 1920s.

### Ceylon

There are few direct references to Ceylon in Jones' writing or scant remaining personal papers, though it must have been exotic, with its mix of cultures and religions, plants and animals (Figure 1). Indeed, there seems to be only a very limited amount of historical writing about forestry in Ceylon. There are, however, some near contemporary accounts that assist in reconstructing the forestry scene that greeted Jones in 1912. Jones arrived in Ceylon just after a census year so that it is possible to provide a succinct contemporaneous statistical snapshot of the colony. The population totalled 4.1 million over 80% of which was rural. The ethnic breakdown was recorded in detail – low country Sinhalese 41.8%, Khandian Sinhalese 24.3%, Ceylon

Tamils 12.8%, Indian Tamils 12.9%, Ceylon Moormen 5.7%, Indian Moormen 0.8%, burghers and Eurasians 0.65% and other smaller populations. There were only 7592 Europeans (mostly English followed by Scottish) amounting to 0.18% of the total population. The main exports by value were tea (52%), rubber (10%), and coconut oil (9%). In terms of land use some 2.75 million acres were cultivated – 35% in coconuts, 24% in rice paddy, 19% in tea and 5% in rubber (Herbertson and Howarth, 1914).



Figure 1: Elephant carrying tribute to the Temple.

Source: Author's collection.

Most of the colony was covered in secondary forest, much modified by centuries of shifting cultivation. Willis (1914, 344), a former director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya (dating from 1843) near Kandy noted that the "forest, which formerly covered practically the whole island was of a different character in the different zones. When the dry zone was cleared for agriculture in early times there must have been large areas of forest left for after its abandonment the country went back to forest" and that "the clearing of the wet zone has taken place in comparatively recent times, more especially in the last half century" (i.e. since 1864). The richest forest was in the wet zone with many Dipterocarpaceae species. Willis (1914, 345) observed that "the forests contain many trees and smaller plants of economic value, but these were mostly exploited before proper conservancy was undertaken, and it will be long before the forests rise to their proper value as a national asset in this respect". Forest was felled in the wet south west and up-lands from the 1870s for plantations of coffee, tea, coconuts, and rubber.

The Report on Ceylon presented at the first Empire Forestry Conference in 1920 provides further detail about the forest estate shortly after Jones had departed from Ceylon. Ainslie (1920), acknowledging some weaknesses in the data, indicated some 4,816 square miles – 19% of the land area was in merchantable forest with and another 15,545 square miles (61%) non-merchantable or inaccessible and 4,869 square miles (19%) given over to agricultural uses. Of 20,361 square miles of forest, ownership was distributed across private

\* The AFHS newsletter has previously published articles by Professor Roche on Owen Jones – see no. 63 (Sep 2014) "Owen Jones: Empire Forester & Victorian Forests Commissioner (1920-25)" and no. 74 (Apr 2018) "Owen Jones: Inaugural Chair of the Forests Commission of Victoria, 1919-1925". They can be found at [www.foresthistory.org.au/newsletter/afhsnewsletter63.pdf](http://www.foresthistory.org.au/newsletter/afhsnewsletter63.pdf) and [www.foresthistory.org.au/newsletter/afhsnewsletter74.pdf](http://www.foresthistory.org.au/newsletter/afhsnewsletter74.pdf).

<sup>1</sup> The New Zealand Institute of Foresters was established in 1929. The name was changed to the New Zealand Institute of Forestry at the Annual General Meeting in 1988. For a discussion of the rationale, see the letter from W. R. J. Sutton (who was then President Elect) published in the *New Zealand Journal of Forestry*, Vol. 33(1), 1988., pp7-8. [http://nzjf.org.nz/contents.php?volume\\_issue=j33\\_1](http://nzjf.org.nz/contents.php?volume_issue=j33_1)



individuals (less than 1%), corporate bodies 23% and the state – with 20.7% timber production and 55.5% other forests.

There is also available a short account of a forestry officer from the mid-1920s (Godfrey-Faussett, 1970). Godfrey-Faussett arrived in Ceylon in 1923 from the Forestry School at Cambridge, a short lived and less prestigious forestry qualification that that offered by Oxford. Godfrey-Faussett was ultimately stationed in both the dry forest zone and wet zone forest divisions. He wrote of learning to identify local timber trees and other lesser "jungle species", of game hunting and eventually passing the statutory Tamil language exam. From a professional point of view "much of our working time was spent on supervising contracts for felling these common (jungle) species to produce firewood to feed the engines of the Government Railway" (Godfrey-Faussett, 1970, 150). There were in 1911, 578 miles of railway line on the island (Herbertson and Howarth, 1914). Selection fellings of more valuable Satinwood (*Swietenia chloroxylon*) and Ceylon Ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) largely went to the Central Sale Depot in Colombo. There was also, he noted, "a good deal of forest police work against both big tree thieves and the many jungle villages who very naturally regarded all trees within range of their village as their communal property" (Godfrey-Faussett, 1970, 150). In 1909 over 1900 "forest offenses" were recorded and clearly the problem persisted long after Jones had departed (Administrative Report, 1910, 635).

### ***Ceylon forest policy and practice 1907 to 1917***

The first attempts to modernise forestry in Ceylon might be tracked back to 1882 and a report by Indian Forest Service officer, Frederick d'Abernon Vincent which resulted in a Forest Ordinance and the establishment of a Forest Department (McNeill, 1938). Progress was limited but by 1907 a new Forest Ordinance "re-declared State ownership of all forest, waste, chena, uncultivated, or unoccupied lands" (Ainslie, 1920, 21). The main effort was still on seeking convictions for "forest offences" – the majority of these related to chena – shifting cultivation, which was earlier identified as "opposed to all the principles of forest management" (Administration Report, 1910, 695). There were no working plans and their creation was regarded as urgent with any stinting being only "false economy" (Administration Report, 1910, 696). Although the existing forest reserves remained comparatively untouched, except for some selection felling of "over-mature trees" the rest of the felling took place in an unregulated fashion. Zon and Sparhawk, (1923, 363) identified the lack of state control

over forest on private lands as a major shortcoming. Lack of staff was also a serious problem eased somewhat by four probationers (three from Oxford, one from Dedra Dun) having been appointed. The *Ceylon Blue Book*, in which forests typically rated only a short paragraph, painted a more positive picture: Forest exploitation has been directed towards the "elimination of over-mature timber which retarded the future regeneration of crops, and the utilization of timber on areas to be alienated for sale, lease, or irrigation purposes" (*Ceylon Blue Book*, 1909, 2). This sentence was repeated verbatim in the Blue Books for 1910-11, 1911-12, and 1914. In the following years, attention was turned toward re-forestation. Some 300 acres were planted in 1915, 526 acres in 1916, bringing the total to 3396 acres and a further 820 acres in 1917 (*Ceylon Blue Book*, 1915-1917; Report for Ceylon, 1917). These included teak plantations and on higher and drier deforested land, eucalypts and wattles (Zon and Sparhawk, 1923, 359).

The real difficulty was twofold – on the one hand the Forest Department was expected to produce a surplus – which it did but at the expense of unregulated felling. In addition, at a time when railway expansion was an important for the continued growth of the plantation economy, the department was expected to supply sleepers and fuel wood (Table 1). Imported broad gauge Jarrah sleepers from Australia were R-5 each. The Forest Department was providing local sleepers to the Public Works Department at R-3.62 (Ceylon blue Book, 1910-11, 46). From 1906 to 1910-11 427,910 broad gauge and 119,343 narrow gauge sleepers were provided for Railways (Ceylon Blue Book, 1910-11, 46). From 1906 to 1917 some 759,190 broad gauge and 281,096 narrow gauge sleepers had been provided. In addition, some 156,463 cu yards of firewood, 141 tons of fuel and over 150,000 pieces of smaller round wood were made available to Railways and Public Works. The level of sleeper extraction was of concern as early as 1909 when it was proposed to limit it to 50,000 p.a. (Report for Ceylon, 1909, 35).

The other major issue major issue facing foresters such as Jones was the impact of chena on the forest lands. The complex legacy of land tenure system – Singalese, Portuguese, and Dutch with rights of occupancy and purchase made it difficult for the Forest Department to expand the area under Forest Reserve. Ainslie (1920, 22) called attention to the fact that the rules for controlling chena, "have not been strictly adhered to" and believed a special ordinance was called for which would restrict

***Table 1: Sleepers supplied to the Railways Department by the Forest Department 1908 to 1917***

Year	1908 [since 1904] *	1909 [since 1904]	1910-11 [since 1906]	1911-12 [since 1906]	1913	1914 [since 1906]	1915 [since 1906]	1916 [since 1906]	1917 [since 1906]
Broad gauge	169,000	238,496	427,910	552,767	n.d.	682,308	706,155	722,050	759,190
Narrow gauge	42,000	87,928	119,343	136,669	n.d.	223,969	234,619	255,740	281,096

\* These are cumulative totals from the year indicated, i.e. 1904 or 1906.

Source: *Ceylon Blue Books*, 1908-1917.

chena cultivation to clearly defined areas and promote chena re-afforestation agreements (borrowing from the creation of teak plantations in Burma). Some 80% of the 1900 plus forest offences prosecuted in 1909 were on chena lands. Jones' (1927, 334) later stated he had seen "many thousands of acres of country (in Ceylon) which had been absolutely ruined by chena". He considered re-afforestation was necessary because the forest that regenerated naturally did not contain the more valuable timber species. With uncontrolled chena, it was also possible for areas to be returned to and burnt over before the forest had regrown.

### *Jones as an Assistant Conservator in Ceylon*

The Forest Department was headed by a Conservator who had two Deputy Conservators and eight Assistant Conservators. All these positions were filled by Europeans. From 1907, it had been decided that all appointees to positions of Assistant Conservator and above would require the Oxford Diploma of Forestry. Underneath these were some 80 Foresters and Forest Rangers and 150 Forest Guards (Ainslie, 1920).

Jones' experiences in Ceylon are briefly mentioned in his application for the Forests Commission of Victoria position and, with some differences in details, in his application to become New Zealand Railways Forester in 1932 – a position he was offered but declined. They are also touched on in his comments as the Australian Delegate to the Second Empire Forestry Conference in Canada in 1923.

On his appointment, Jones – on the recommendation of his Oxford Professor Sir William Schlich – was sent to Germany to make a detailed study of how to prepare of working plans – in theory and in the field. This was indicative of the elementary stage of state forestry in Ceylon and the future direction that the department wished to go along. He also spent several months at the Prussian Forest Statistical Bureau.

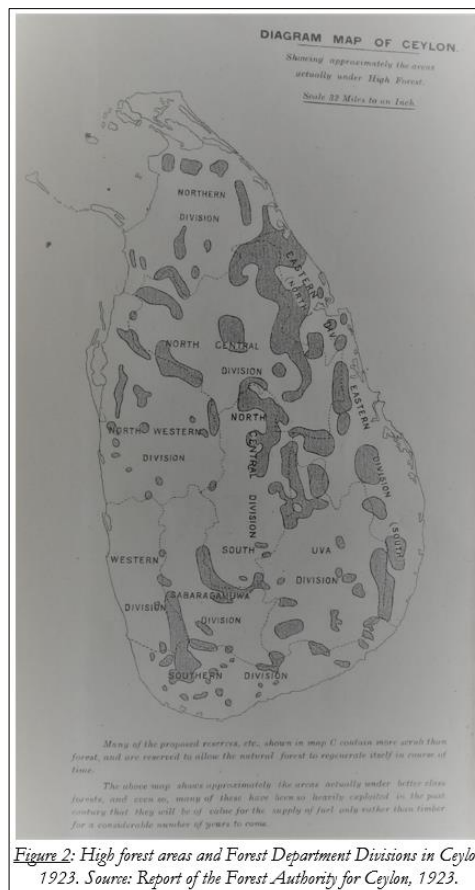
On arrival in Ceylon, Jones was posted to the Forest Department head office in Kandy for three months, presumably for orientation. The inland city, former capital of the Kandyan kingdom, is located in the central highlands amongst a forested landscape. There were substantial tea plantations on the higher lands on formerly forested land. After that, he was placed in charge of a Forest Division. Over the next three years he notes he served as Assistant Conservator in charge of six of the provinces: Eastern, North Western, Central, Uva,

Sabaragamuwa and Western. His responsibilities included provision of sleepers and firewood to the Railways Department. The *Ceylon Blue Book* details that from June 1913 he was Assistant Conservator for the Kurunegala Division. The salary was £350 and government accommodation was provided for 6% of his salary. He also had a travelling allowance. The only European in the Division, his staff included three Forest Rangers, 13 Forest Guards, two messengers, three clerks, and 52 Forest Rangers (*Ceylon Blue Book*, 1913, K172). From June 1914, he was Assistant Conservator in the Nuwara Elyia Division (with the annual salary increment of £25). Nuwara Elyia was reached by a narrow-gauge railway line. Late in 1914 he was Acting Assistant Conservator for Uva and in November 1915 came back to the Colombo Division (on £400). As with Godfrey-Faussett in the 1920s, Jones thus gained experience in dry, wet and highland forest areas. During this period, he was also appointed by Herbert Tomalin, the Conservator of Forests for Ceylon as a Special Officer for six months to report on the up-country fuel plantations and reserves. He was also involved in expanding the department's eucalypt, teak and mahogany plantations. By 1916, Jones was in charge of the Ratnapura Division with its 61 staff (including 11 Europeans). Parenthetically it is worth noting that this is much larger than the staff Jones had available in Victoria. Comprising the Sabaragamuwa and Western Provinces this was an important district containing as it did large areas of merchantable forests. It also contained the Central Timber Depot in the capital, Colombo. This was the largest of six timber and firewood depots operated by the department. The city

had a population of 211,000 in 1911 and it was by far the largest urban area and was the main transport node, the main port for exports and imports, and the site of most government functions. Here Jones remained until 1917 when his efforts to enlist finally proved successful.

Jones formed some quite clear views on chena in Ceylon to the effect that even controlled shifting cultivation and natural regeneration of the forest was not enough. Rather that, "controlled shifting cultivation combined with planting" were necessary to "exercise control" and that a much smaller scale of intervention, than hitherto used was necessary to secure this goal (Jones, 1927, 335).

This map reproduced from the report on Ceylon for the 1923 Empire Forestry Conference (Figure 2), identifies the Forest Divisions in which Jones worked. It also shows the limited extent of "high forest" remaining on the island.



*Figure 2: High forest areas and Forest Department Divisions in Ceylon 1923. Source: Report of the Forest Authority for Ceylon, 1923.*



Godfrey-Faussett (1970, 150) refers to a small one timber and firewood depot in Jaffna for the sale of locally felled palu (*Mimusops hexandra*) and milla (*Vitex altissima*). The Central Timber Depot was in Colombo (Figure 3) from which the more important satinwood (*Swietenia chloroxylon*) and ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) was sold and exported. In addition, there were smaller firewood depots at Nuwara, Eliya, Ohiya, and Haputale (*Report of the Forest Authority for Ceylon*, 1923, 6).

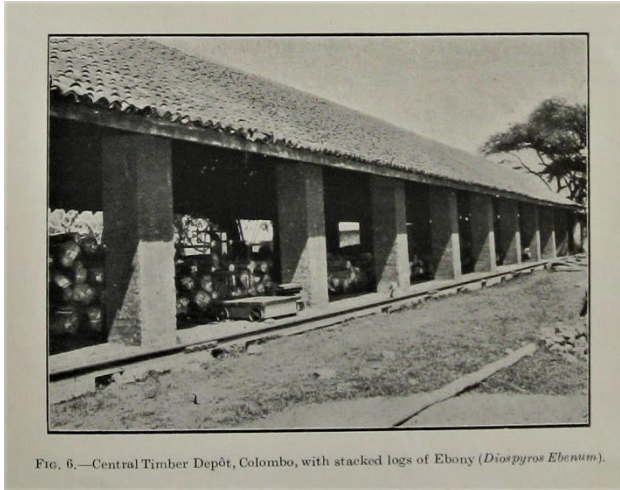


FIG. 6.—Central Timber Depôt, Colombo, with stacked logs of Ebony (*Diospyros Ebenum*).

*Figure 3: Central Timber Depot, Colombo, with stacked logs of Ebony. Source: Report of the Forest Authority for Ceylon, 1923.*

The report on Ceylon at the 1923 Empire Forestry Conference summed up the efforts in the period when Jones was in Ceylon as follows. The department was considered primarily as a supplier of railway sleepers, firewood and hardwood timbers to other government departments, that it was to establish depots for the sale of timber and firewood, and finally it was to provide revenue through the sale of timber licences. The report continues: "(from 1905) up to the year 1914 little attention was paid to frost improvement, or re-forestation, and no attempt whatever made to hold the balance between forest capital and forest increment" (*Report of the Forest Authority for Ceylon*, 1923, 5). During the time Jones was in Ceylon, in terms of professionally qualified officers, the Forest Department was understaffed, indeed, his enlistment in 1917 added to the problem.

Willis (1938, 200) could remark that the Ceylon economy went through coffee, tea and rubber booms such that the government was primarily interested in agricultural development: "the main consideration was the alienation of Crown land for economic products, which of course yielded much revenue in land sales ... While the Public Domain was being thus alienated there was little time or thought spent on the reservation of land for forestry. In brief the main object of the government's land policy has been the obtaining of revenue."

### **Visualising Ceylon and its Forest Economy**

Jones' time in Ceylon immediately precedes the great postcard boom of the 1900s to 1910s that accompanied the development of an inexpensive world postal networks that goes in hand with developments in pulp

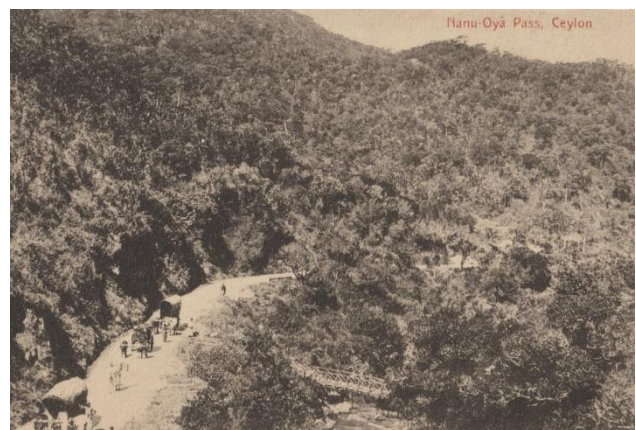
and paper manufacture and the technology to manufacture photographic scenes in the form of cards. This makes it possible to get a sense of the landscapes within which Jones was working, particularly when they are linked back to statistical details about land use and forest cover and the use of forest products.

The railway system was crucial to the successful export of various plantation crops of tea, coconut and rubber (Figure 4). The requirement to supply these needs hampered the development of state forestry in Ceylon.



*Figure 4: Large gauge railway line running through coconut plantations. Source: Author's collection.*

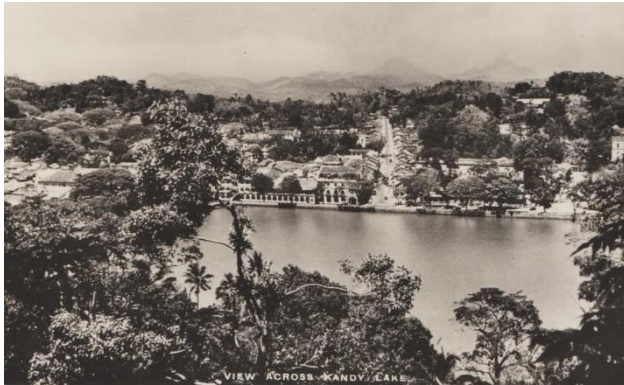
The forest landscape at the Nanu Oya Pass (Figure 5), located south of Kandy in the central highland area, was likely part of the large area of unmerchantable forest land covering 61% of the country. Plant ecologist Henry Gleason (1916) left a description of these forests growing at some 6000-7000 feet: "much of the original forest is left ... the mossy or subalpine forest presents a most picturesque and characteristic appearance ... It is the color which is strange. Of course, the color is green, speaking generally, but here is every shade from the palest yellow green to the darkest olive" (Gleason, 1916, 36). Of the forest interior, he wrote that, the "trees are low, not over 30 feet high, crooked with gnarly branches. The leaves are small, stiff and leathery, and mostly clustered at the ends of branches ... the undergrowth is remarkably dense and in some places the forest is well-nigh impenetrable" (Gleason, 1916, 37).



*Figure 5: Forest landscape at the Nanu Oya Pass near Nuwara Eliya. Source: Author's collection.*

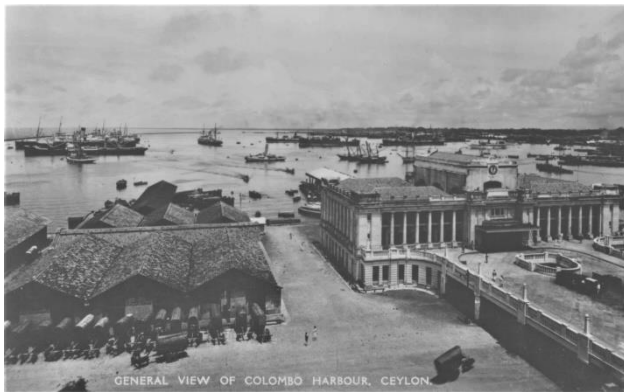


Kandy, the inland second urban area of Ceylon, at 1640 feet was formerly at the centre of a Kandian kingdom which was not overthrown by the British until 1815. This was Jones's initial forestry posting in Ceylon (Figure 6). This was also the general area where Jones carried out a special investigation into upland fuel wood supplies.



*Figure 6: Kandy the Headquarters of the Forest Department.  
Source: Author's collection.*

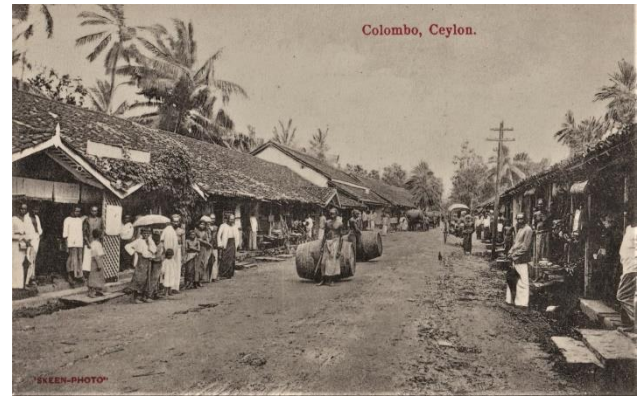
By 1916, Jones was based in Colombo. With an urban area population of 211,000 in 1911 it was the largest city on the island. Colombo was founded and served as main export port from the plantation economy (Figure 7). Its importance grew after the opening of the Suez Canal when it was a stopover on shipping routes from south east Asia and Australasia to Britain. To Jones, the city must have been a peculiar mix of European public buildings along with rickshaws, animal drawn carts and different ethnic groups being concentrated in various parts of the city (Figures 8 and 9).



*Figure 7: Colombo and harbour. Source: Author's collection.*



*Figure 8: The Council Chamber in Colombo.  
Source: Author's collection.*



*Figure 9: One of the ethnic neighbourhoods of Colombo.  
Source: Author's collection.*

*This scene shows barrels being rolled along the street and others on wagons in the distance.*

The local forest economy was summed up by Zon and Sparhawk (1923) using 1910 to 1920 average figures (Table 2). Imports dwarf exports, which were mainly of hardwood. The values were also comparatively modest.

**Table 2: Timber Imports and Exports from Ceylon 1910-1920 Averaged data**

Product	Exports cu ft	Export £	Imports cu ft	Imports £
Round & square timber	50,170	43,957	366,642	229,920
Sawn timber	386,710	13,782	175,620	7,559
Other timber		24,600		19,800

*Source: Zon and Sparhawk (1923).*

Coconut exports in comparison, in 1911 for example, were worth £546,000 at just over 4% of exports by value (Herbertson and Howarth, 1914, 475). At the same time £153,000 worth of tea chests was being imported. The manufacture of tea and rubber chests from local timbers was a significant activity, albeit organised on a "cottage industry" basis involving some 70,000 people. Another 5,500 people were involved in furniture making, boat building and cooperage and related trades (Figure 10). Basket and cane weaving as well as harvesting of minor forest products also employed 1,000 people (Figure 11) (Zon and Sparhawk, 1923).



*Figure 10: Coopers at work, the location is not specified.  
Source: Author's collection.*



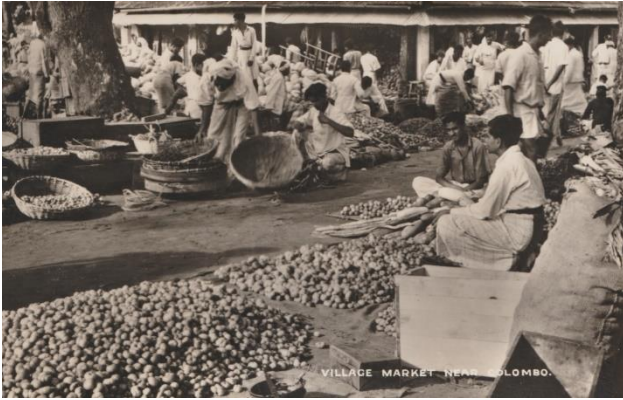


Figure 11: A market scene at a village near Colombo.

Source: Author's collection.

Note particularly the cane baskets.

### Conclusion

I have referred throughout to Ceylon, rather than Sri Lanka, because Jones was very much operating as an imperial forester in a British Crown Colony. The fragmentary picture of forestry in Ceylon assembled here, leads me to suggest that I have misunderstood and misemphasised parts of the Ceylon years and its impact on Jones' time in Victoria. I had previously recognised, that Jones – at a young age at the start of his forestry career – had considerable responsibilities as an Assistant Conservator in charge of a division, though had not appreciated that he exercised considerable authority under the *Forests Ordinance, 1907*. There is a parallel here with Lane Poole – in Western Australia, seeing himself as an expert above the ebb and flow of political expediency, he clashed with his minister and eventually resigned. Jones encountered similar difficulties in Victoria and found his expertise and also his authority was contested.

But there is another aspect that I had not really appreciated previously. The aspirations of the Forest Department in Ceylon did not match its achievements. This was because of the view in other government departments that the Forest Department was there to supply railway sleepers and with land settlement policy firmly in the hands of other state agencies, this further eroded the department's efforts. Jones was certainly a much better technically trained forester than Godfrey-Faussett. Sent to Germany for additional training on working plans and on advanced use of forest statistics, his only special assignment was his work on up-country fuel wood. The working plans he was equipped to create never eventuated. It is easy to imagine Jones becoming frustrated with time consuming routine office tasks and managing railway sleeper contracts. Now I would be more inclined to suggest that for Jones, Ceylon was a place of unfulfilled forestry ambitions. The local population through chena were degrading the forest, "forest offences" proliferated, with lands officials able to frustrate longer term forestry goals. The Forest Department was reduced to being only a provider of railway sleepers with no regard to the future regeneration the forests. Ceylon no longer seemed to be a place where he could implement the forestry principles and practices that he had learned under Schlich at Oxford.

Jones did not use Ceylon as an exemplar of forestry practice when promoting forestry in Australia or New Zealand. Instead he reached back to German examples. If his Ceylon experiences were not to be looked back on with satisfaction, then this may have intensified Jones' contests with land officials and politicians over forest reservation and forest management in Victoria. Any setbacks in Victoria were perhaps more keenly felt than I had previously appreciated. Victoria was a rare opportunity for Jones to implement scientific state forestry but by 1925 he was sufficiently professionally frustrated as to leave for New Zealand and enter private sector employment. This last paragraph is replete with "perhaps" and "maybes" and only detailed work on any surviving papers in the Sri Lanka archives may provide a better answer. Even so, it is enough to suggest that the way in which British forestry practices in south Asia translated to an encountered opposition in Australia (and New Zealand) was complex in unexpected ways.

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## OWEN JONES: A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 1920-1948

by Michael Roche

Owen Jones BA Dip Forestry (Oxford) was the inaugural chair of the Forests Commission of Victoria from 1919 to 1925. He came to Australia via war service as a pilot and prior to that the Forest Department in Ceylon. After leaving Victoria, he was employed by New Zealand Perpetual Forests as their Afforestation Superintendent. After WWII, he continued worked in New Zealand as a forestry consultant until his death in 1955.

Jones' writing provides insights into the forestry scene in Victoria in the early 1920s, into the challenges he faced in explaining the purpose and methods of scientific state forestry. His New Zealand work was focussed more on company afforestation activities in which he was centrally involved. He remained a strong supporter of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters.

1920. Fire Protection. *The Gum Tree*, 5(16), 9-11.

1920. Victoria's forests, some first impressions. *The Gum Tree*, 5(14), 7-10.

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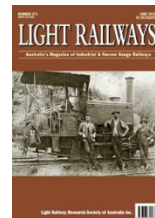
From 1926 to the late 1930s, Jones also prepared a short Forestry Superintendent's Report included as part of the New Zealand Perpetual Forests Annual Report.

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Anon. 1955. Obituary: Owen Jones. *Empire Forestry Review* 34(10), 2-3.

## NEW ISSUE OF LIGHT RAILWAYS



*Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways*, June 2020 (LR273). Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN 0727 8101. [www.lrrsa.org.au](http://www.lrrsa.org.au).

LR273 includes a feature article by Nick Anchen titled "Another Warburton

Timber Man" (pp13-18) and is the next in a series of interviews conducted in 2012 with "old time Warburton timber men". This article is about Ray Dafter who was born in 1931. Among other things, he discusses his ten years working in the timber industry, including at the Federal Mill in the 1940s. An interview with Des Morrish was published in LR259 (February 2018).

There is also a report (pp29-31) on some field visits undertaken by Mike McCarthy and friends (including Peter Evans) for his soon-to-be-published book on early South Gippland rail lines, *In the Shadow of the Prom*. While not solely on timber tramways, the field report mentions a tramway near Toora that was built to supply sleepers to the Great Southern Railway, and the tramway that ran from Port Albert to Goodwood Sawmill. On p30, there is a photo of the remains of one of the two trestles (i.e. bridge supports) that have survived. This book will be published in September 2020 and can be ordered from the LRSSA online shop at <https://shop.lrrsa.org.au> for a price of \$55 plus postage. It will be 285pp, contain 212 photographs, 64 maps, plans and diagrams, and more.



## BISON TO HELP BRING BACK UK WILDLIFE \*

Bison are set to be introduced to a British woodland following a groundbreaking conservation project in Kent, funded by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

Led by Kent Wildlife Trust and the Wildwood Trust, the project will take place in Blean woods near Canterbury. The "Wilder Blean" project aims to restore the ecosystem of the area's renowned ancient woodlands.

The European bison is the continent's largest land mammal and adult males can weigh as much as a tonne. The species is known as an "ecosystem engineer" because of its ability to create and improve habitats for other species.

Despite their size, bison are peaceful animals. Their ability to fell trees by rubbing up against them, and eating the bark, creates space for a wide range of other species to thrive. No other species can perform this job in quite the same way. The bison will be accompanied by other grazing animals to create the greatest plant and animal biodiversity possible; creating stronger habitats through natural processes that will withstand the current environmental crisis and species decline, and in the long run, reverse it.

Bison releases have already proved very successful in European countries including Poland, Romania and the Netherlands, not only in restoring habitats but also giving people a truly wild experience.

The project has been made possible by an award of £1,125,000 from the People's Postcode Lottery Dream Fund. The Dream Fund, run by the Postcode Dream Trust, was created to give charities and good causes the opportunity to deliver their dream project over a two-year period.

Kent Wildlife Trust owns several woodlands in the Blean area, covering a total of almost 2,500 acres – about the size of a thousand football pitches. This makes it one of the largest areas of surviving ancient woodland in England. The trust's long-standing goal is to protect wildlife and restore the natural habitats on which it depends.

Kent Wildlife Trust will be responsible for the overall management of the project, including the installation and maintenance of infrastructure, such as fencing for the trial area.

Wildwood Trust is a leading native species conservation charity, whose native species animal park is situated next to the woodland where the project will take place. The Wildwood Trust team are renowned experts in native species conservation and animal husbandry. They will be looking after the animals daily and ensuring their welfare.

The project will involve extensive consultation and engagement with local residents, landowners, and interest groups who know and love the area. Local people will have the opportunity to become involved in the innovative project and help return the land to a functioning ecosystem, brimming with life.

### Paul Hadaway, Director of Conservation at Kent Wildlife Trust said:

"This award means we can now take an important step towards reversing the terrifying rate of species loss in the UK. The Wilder Blean project will prove that a wilder, nature-based solution is the right one to tackling the climate and nature crisis we now face. Using missing keystone species like bison to restore natural processes to habitats is the key to creating bio-abundance in our landscape."

### Paul Whitfield, Director General of Wildwood Trust said:

"The partners in this project have long dreamt of restoring the true wild woodlands that have been missing from England for too long. This will allow people to experience nature in a way they haven't before, connecting them back to the natural world around them in a deeper and more meaningful way. It will inspire people and demonstrate to policy makers that nature presents the answer to the crisis we face. It will empower them to make a difference and it will prove that there is a way to make things better in these challenging times."

### Laura Chow, Head of Charities at People's Postcode Lottery, said:

"The introduction of these extraordinary animals to British woodlands will be a hugely significant moment in the fight to protect and enhance biodiversity. The players of People's Postcode Lottery provide vital funding to a wide of range of environmental projects. I am delighted this award from the Postcode Dream Trust will enable this important project to go ahead."



*Photo by Evan Bowen-Jones.*

\* Thanks to Sybil Jack for information about this project.



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