



# Australian Forest History Society

Newsletter No. 89

August 2023

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

## Dancing Orpheus



*Still from "Dancing Orpheus", ABC Television, 1962.*

*See Libby Robin's article "Watching Lyrebirds  
in Sherbrooke Forest", pp3-4.*



### MEMBERSHIP

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

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

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PO Box 5128  
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### IN THIS ISSUE

Coming Up – The AFHS Annual General Meeting ....	2
Watching Lyrebirds in Sherbrooke Forest .....	3
A Challenge for the AFHS? .....	4
Launch of John Dargavel's <i>Anthropocene Days</i> .....	5
Trying Classic Silviculture .....	6
Leslie (Les) Thomas Ortlipp .....	7
Jackie Lewis – MMBW Ranger Jackie Lewis – MMBW Ranger .....	8
Vale Alan Brown AM, FIFA, FTSE (1931-2023) .....	9
ABC News: Italian Prisoners of War who Worked on South-east SA Farms and Forests in WWII Remembered .....	10
Request for Information – Prison Forests .....	11
The Giants: The Extraordinary Story of Bob Brown and the Forest .....	12
Ferdinand von Mueller Correspondence Launch .....	12
Robert Onfray's Blogs .....	12
The Dame Mary Gilmore Tree at Westbourne Woods, Yarralumla, ACT .....	13
Giant Red Gum at Orroroo, South Australia .....	13
New Books and Publications .....	14

Name:	
Address:	
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Fax:	
E-mail	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Please mark the box if you would like a receipt – otherwise an acknowledgment will be sent by e-mail.
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### NEXT ISSUE

The newsletter is normally published three times a year, with the occasional special issue. The next issue should be out in December 2023.

**Input is always welcome.**

Contributions can be sent to  
[fintan\\_olaighin@yahoo.com.au](mailto:fintan_olaighin@yahoo.com.au).

Contributions may be edited.

### COMING UP – THE AFHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

While a date hasn't yet been set, the society's Annual General Meeting will be held in Canberra in mid to late November, possibly also with online participation. The papers and meeting details will be distributed in late October or early November.

Members are encouraged to nominate for the committee – the role can be as active as you want. It's been a number of years since we've had a full committee, and it would be great to see some new and/or returning faces getting involved. We've been quiet for the past few years, with the newsletter being our main activity, but we are always looking for new energy. There's always a lot of forest history happening out there.

Even if you can't make it to the AGM, you can nominate yourself. The nomination form will be included with the meeting papers.

The current committee was elected at the AGM on 28 November 2023:

<b>President:</b>	Juliana Lazzari
<b>Vice-President:</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
<b>Secretary and public officer:</b>	Kevin Frawley
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Fintán Ó Laighin
<b>Committee:</b>	Peter Evans

## WATCHING LYREBIRDS IN SHERBROOKE FOREST

By Libby Robin

This extract from *What Birdo Is That?* (as published in the *Guardian Australia*, 4 June 2023) was provided by the author for publication in the AFHS Newsletter. *What Birdo Is That?* was published in May 2023 by Melbourne University Press. For more information, see [www.mup.com.au/books/what-birdo-is-that-paperback-softback](http://www.mup.com.au/books/what-birdo-is-that-paperback-softback).

Details of the short documentary film, *Dancing Orpheus*, which Dr Robin mentions in the article, are available at [aso.gov.au/titles/tv/dancing-orpheus](http://aso.gov.au/titles/tv/dancing-orpheus).

In my family, ornithology meant lyrebirds. Not long before I started school we moved to the market town of Croydon, then just beyond the fringes of suburban Melbourne. The Dandenong Ranges were our backyard—too close when bushfires swept through in the summer of 1962 and my father joined the firefighters and came home late, blackened, with his eyebrows singed. In late autumn and early winter, however, the mountains were cool, friendly and at peace. Dad and I would rise at 5 a.m., long before dawn, and creep around a chilly and dripping Sherbrooke Forest with sticky black soil clinging to our hands and knees.

Ornithology meant being quiet, listening, searching for 'Spotty'. I could never quite work out how my father knew which of the birds we heard was Spotty, except that we seemed to follow the loudest and clearest calls. Usually we would find him in a clearing, foraging in deep leaf-mould with his long feet. Sometimes, if we were really lucky, he would throw his long tail over his head and dance.

My father, like so many enthusiasts before and since, never tired of the antics of the lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae*. He never noticed if the day was cold or wet. Much has been written about the beauty of the lyrebird's tail, but the fascination of this bird for him was its almost-human personality. With large bright eyes adapted for dark forest life, and teasing calls, a master of mimicry and ventriloquism, Spotty lured us into thinking like a bird. If we could wriggle into a position where we could watch for a sustained period, we could observe the tricks of his trade. He would be here—but his call was over there. Whose call? My favourite was his eastern whipbird imitation, but it could equally be a bell miner or one of the many scratchy little calls of as-yet-unidentified 'little brown jobs'. Spotty was an ornithological schoolmaster. As he worked through his mellow repertoire, Dad would whisper to me the names of the birds Spotty was imitating. The sounds were not all bird calls. He did a splendid breaking twig, too—possibly the noise he associated with us.

### *Learning to live with people*

The lyrebird is secretive, but not always shy. It takes the trouble to bury its discarded feathers and drop the faecal sacs of its young in streams to be washed away. Yet its bold encounters with the human species have given it a special place in the popular imagination. A mutual

fascination for lyrebirds and people emerges from many of the curious lyrebird anecdotes recorded in the 'Stray Feathers' columns of early Emus. A gang of men building a road into Walhalla, east of Melbourne, in 1907 were favoured with a regular 'building inspector'—a male lyrebird who capitalised on the grubs and worms disturbed by the works.

Many early reports expressed concern about the lyrebird's habit of nesting so close to the ground. 'In Southern Gippsland foxes have become so numerous that all ground nesting birds are in a fair way to extinction', the *Australian Naturalist* reported in 1906. 'It is to be hoped that before the last of [the lyrebirds] fall victims to Mr Reynard, they will learn to build out of reach.' LC Cook at Poowong in South Gippsland recorded that indeed lyrebirds did learn: they built their nests higher and higher when fox numbers increased.

The idea that this bird could 'learn' where to place a nest was supported by its ability to learn sounds. It was well known traditionally for its double calls. Many of the Aboriginal words for lyrebird pick up on the double call, including *gol gol* in the Newcastle area and *buhn buhn* in West Gippsland (after which a small town is named). The lyrebird was a quick learner of new sounds. There were anecdotal reports of it imitating knapping (chipping stone), chainsaws and even the three blasts of a timber-mill whistle. One bird caused havoc when it imitated the mill's three-whistle sequence in its own 'double' format, inadvertently ringing out the six-blast signal that was reserved for reporting a fatality.

Lyrebirds provide an excellent motivation for ornithological excursions, at least in the eastern states, because they are active in late autumn and winter, a time of year when other birds tend to be at their least interesting. Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra all have lyrebirds within an easy drive of the city and the (introduced) superb lyrebird is an attraction of Mount Field National Park, near Hobart.

Lyrebird habitat conservation has been a particular concern because of the birds' proximity to large and sprawling cities. Isobel and Harold Bradley and other members of the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group are some of the many voluntary enthusiasts who have supported conservation work through banding and observing over the years. In 1998 the Sherbrooke group, with a dozen or so members, spent 1000 hours surveying lyrebirds and their habitat in 377 visits to the forest; they produced 233 written reports of sightings, all located with compass bearings. This group continues to be 'the eyes and ears of the forest' for Parks Victoria.

After many years of decline, lyrebird numbers are at least stabilising through predator-control programs directed at foxes and feral cats. Indeed, when the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group celebrated 60 years of action for lyrebirds in 2018, the signs were promising, with increasing chick-survival rates. But the severe storms of successive La Niña winters since then pose new threats.



### Spotty (1942-64)

Spotty was not just Spotty for my family—he was a Melbourne institution from the 1940s to the 1960s. He was part of the folklore of the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group and starred in a television documentary, *Dancing Orpheus*, in 1962. Spotty lured many into Sherbrooke Forest. He was the reason to visit Sherbrooke Forest for generations of parents and children. His dates are recorded: 1942-64, as are those of his predecessor, Timmy (1927-53). There is a lineage of 'famous', personally named lyrebirds in this forest.

The proximity of his haunts to a growing city made him famous, but also vulnerable. In 1964, Spotty disappeared. Although he was very old, there were suspicious circumstances: my father murmured about vandals and shots being heard in the area. Along with much of Melbourne, our family went into mourning on learning of his disappearance. His death marked the end of an era.



Images from "*Dancing Orpheus*", ABC,  
[aso.gov.au/titles/tv/dancing-orpheus/clip1](https://aso.gov.au/titles/tv/dancing-orpheus/clip1).

### A CHALLENGE FOR THE AFHS?

By John Dargavel

In May this year, the Victorian Premier announced that the government would end all logging in its native state forest by the end of the year.<sup>1</sup> The same sort of policy had been applied in Western Australia and Queensland, as Peter Holzworth discussed at our 1999 conference, and comes after numerous transfers of state forests to conservation reserves.<sup>2</sup>

What does it mean for Australian forest history when an era ends? History is rewritten when historians have concerns in mind. What are ours? What challenges us?

The issues that stand out to me are the need to understand how the structure of the forest stands themselves have changed with time and circumstance, and the need to see understand the history of forest ecology more thoroughly.

The issue that interests me personally, is how forests are regulated in practice. The startling admission in the Victorian announcement was that "there are no options for regulatory reform which can prevent further legal injunctions continuing to disrupt native timber harvesting operations". How and how far have state governments ever been able to implement their laws and policies in practice, I wonder? They tried and some members may know of times when every log had to be measured and branded with a state hammer before it could be removed from a state forest. What has happened since?

### References

1. The Hon Daniel Andrews MP, Premier of Victoria, 2023, "Delivering certainty for timber workers", Victoria State Government Media Release, 23 May 2023. [www.premier.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/230523-Delivering-Certainty-For-Timber-Workers.pdf](https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/230523-Delivering-Certainty-For-Timber-Workers.pdf)
2. Peter Holzworth, 1999. "Recent forest-use disputes in Queensland: A history of resolution", in John Dargavel and Brenda Libbis (eds), *Australia's Ever-changing Forests IV*. Canberra: Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Australian National University, pp205-223. [www.foresthistory.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/AustraliasEverChangingForestsIV.pdf](https://www.foresthistory.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/AustraliasEverChangingForestsIV.pdf) (full proceedings)

## LAUNCH OF JOHN DARGAVEL'S *ANTHROPOCENE DAYS*

By Ruth Morgan

On 18 April 2023, John Dargavel's book, "*Anthropocene Days*", was launched at the ANU Fenner School of Environment & Society in Canberra by Associate Professor Ruth Morgan, Director of the ANU Centre for Environmental History. Her speaking notes are reproduced with her permission.

The notice of the launch is at [fennerschool.anu.edu.au/news-events/events/book-launch-anthropocene-days](https://fennerschool.anu.edu.au/news-events/events/book-launch-anthropocene-days).

Information on "*Anthropocene Days*" is at [www.uhpress.co.uk/publications/2022/08/17/anthropocene-days](https://www.uhpress.co.uk/publications/2022/08/17/anthropocene-days).

Thank you – it's a real honour to have the opportunity to speak about John's book and his work.

I'd like to pay my respects to the Custodians on whose unceded lands we're gathered here today, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Peoples, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

It's fitting that we meet not far from Sullivan's Creek, which passes through the campus on its way to the Murrumbidgee, the Murray and onto the Southern Ocean. In *Anthropocene Days*, John reminds us that among the willows that the University's founders planted, is a group of Lombardy poplars that have grown from suckers from the roots of a tree that once shaded a sheep pen. Trees, writes John, "can bear a great weight of memory. Unseen. ... They are not descendants, they are the same tree that still struggles to come up again and again, despite the best efforts of the grass mowers. John muses on where it might have come from, who planted it 150 or more years ago, watched it grow, enjoyed its shade as the sheep would have done. But that rustic scene also casts the dark shadow of memory for the Ngunnawal people who were disposed as it grew."<sup>1</sup>

In *Anthropocene Days*, John gently reflects on his journey from his childhood home in Old Lodge Lane in London, through his training as a young forester in Edinburgh, onto South Australia and pulp plantations of Victoria, and then the Australian National University, and most recently, to Kennon Street in Doncaster East.

I came to John's work during my Honours studies in environmental history, when I was still finding my feet and found Stephen Dovers' edited collections especially insightful. I learned from John about forest history – that, as he wrote in 1994, "the forest historian has to take a long view into the past to unravel the manner by which human actions and natural processes that have shaped the landscape which urban and rural dwellers now admire in their different ways".<sup>2</sup> He later wrote the first biography of forester Charles Lane Poole, *The Zealous Conservator*, whose career I encountered in my own research on southwestern Australia's environmental history.

John had been one of the founders of the Australian Forest History Society in 1988, which held its first conference at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies here at the ANU in May that year. Recognising the growing interest in Australia's

settler and Indigenous history around the Bicentenary, as well as interest in the human effects on the Australian environment, they aimed to "advance historical understanding of human interactions with Australian forest and woodland environments".<sup>3</sup> It took its inspiration from similar initiatives in North America as well as the Forest History Unit of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations.

A decade later in 1998, John edited the first special issue on Australia's environmental history for the journal, *Environment and History*. In his editorial, he wrote, "There is an urgency and a fracture to Australian environmental history. Great areas of the continent are racked by dryland salinity, threats to endangered species – some are already extinct, polluted rivers, and many other problems. This is the white tale of pioneering and development, conservation and preservation, and of finding place and identity in a new land. If we can understand it better, perhaps we can be reconciled with the past and walk forward with a lighter and more companionable step, or so the hope is."<sup>4</sup>

Founded by White House Press just a few years earlier, *Environment and History* marked the rise of environmental history as a distinct field of scholarship both in the United Kingdom as well as here in Australia, and elsewhere. Forest history, along with historical geography and public history, had intertwined to develop a uniquely Australian approach to environmental history, grappling with settler sense of place and the ethics of settler relationships to stolen land. John was soon involved in steering the young journal's direction, joining the Editorial Board in 1996, and encouraging the wider international recognition of Australia's forest history, as well as a greater appreciation of the imperial and transnational nature of Australia's environmental history.

Hope is a theme to which John returns in *Anthropocene Days*, as he wrestles with unfolding environmental crises, from climate change to biodiversity loss. Reflecting on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, he writes, "lies in the determination of many thousands of scientists from almost every country as they work together in inquiries that range from deep oceans to the high atmosphere, from deserts to tundra, from geological time reconstructed from Antarctic ice to recent fires and floods, and much else. It is a great flowering of the enlightened human spirit ... In international politics – there is a great human hope for building a better world. For John's mother, the hope for peace lay in the League of Nations established after the First World War; for John it lay in the United Nations established after the Second World War; naïve perhaps when set against the centuries of war. Now John sees that hope for curbing climate change also lies in the United Nations".<sup>5</sup>

Finally, John turns to geographer Lesley Head's *Hope and Grief in the Anthropocene*.<sup>6</sup> She looks at the ways in which people think about their place in the natural world and starts in a way that resonates with John as she writes, "We need to deal with at least the possibility of catastrophe. Yet daily life continues more or less



unchanged, in varying combinations of struggle and contentment."<sup>7</sup> Her views of hope as something "practised and performed" fits neatly with the ideals of forestry and is repeated every time a tree is planted. She also sees that a social pressure to be optimistic about the future avoids dealing with the possibility of catastrophe. Head's view of grief draws on the loss of favourite places in a way that evokes fire-ravaged forests to John.

In this beautiful book, John has invited us to think, worry, and wonder with him and his life of learning – about forests, about nature, about the world. Asking, "Is that the nub of the world's environmental crisis: that in the business of everyday, we pass by with our connections unacknowledged?"

But he reminds us, "There is hope in persistence."<sup>8</sup>

Persist he has – thank you for *Anthropocene Days*, John, and for your shaping of our field.

### References

1. John Dargavel, 2023. *Anthropocene Days*, pp47-48.
2. John Dargavel, 1994. In Stephen Dovers (ed.), *Australian Environmental History: Essays and Cases*.
3. K.J. Frawley and N. Semple (eds), 1988. *Australia's Ever-changing Forests: Proceedings of the First National Conference on Australian Forest History*.
4. John Dargavel, 1998. "Editorial", *Environment and History* vol. 4, no. 2, pp127-28.
5. John Dargavel, *Anthropocene Days*.
6. Lesley Head, 2016. *Hope and Grief in the Anthropocene: Re-conceptualising human-nature relations*.
7. Lesley Head, cited in *Anthropocene Days*.
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### TRYING CLASSIC SILVICULTURE

By John Dargavel

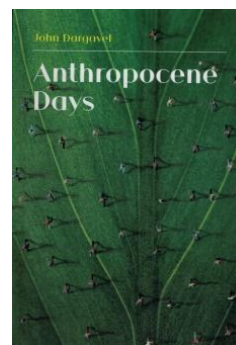
This extract from "Anthropocene Days" was provided by the author for publication in the AFHS newsletter. "Anthropocene Days" was published in February 2023 by White Horse Press. For more information, see [www.whpress.co.uk/publications/2022/08/17/anthropocene-days](http://www.whpress.co.uk/publications/2022/08/17/anthropocene-days).

In 1959-1960 I managed some forest blocks in East Gippsland that the company I worked for had bought to supply eucalypt wood to its Maryvale pulp mill near Morwell. They were further away than the company's plantations, but their wood could be sent cheaply by rail. Most of these blocks had been cleared at some stage and had reverted almost entirely to natural forest of young pole-sized trees that yielded good quality pulpwood. Like many of the patches being cleared for plantations, I thought that they were probably about 25-30 years old – there is no easy way to tell in eucalypts – which placed their origin to the depression of the 1930s. My Edinburgh forestry training became more relevant in these blocks because I could use two of the classic silvicultural systems that had hardly been used in Australia before.

One group of blocks had a mixture of white stringybark (*Eucalyptus globoidea*) and other species that, once they had been cut down, sent up shoots from their stumps. We were working systematically across these blocks with the coppice system, felling the standing trees for their wood and letting the shoots grow into what we hoped would be a new even-aged crop that could be felled again in about twenty years. The system had been going for four or five years and presented a promising appearance because eucalypts shoot up very quickly at first. However, it was uncertain how long this would persist, and whether we might have to reduce the number of shoots sprouting from each stump to a single dominant one or whether that would occur naturally. My immediate concern was the local antipathy to our creation of Tree Farms as we called them. Perhaps it was the arrival of corporate rather than family owners, or perhaps it was the idea that any forest should be tended rather than cleared for a farm, but there were too many unexplained fires that our crews had to put out with no help, and on one worrying occasion with active opposition from the local fire brigade.

The other group of blocks on hillier country had a similarly aged young forest composed largely of silvertop ash (*Eucalyptus sieberi*), a species that needed to be regenerated from seed. We were using the system of felling alternate parallel strips, each twenty metres wide in the expectation that a new crop would germinate and grow successfully in the felled strips. The early results also appeared promising, but it was unknown when it might be possible to fell the uncut strips. Thankfully, there seemed to be no local objection to the striped landscape we were creating.

Although these entries into native forest management were innovative, they did not last many more years, partly because their early promise was uncertain, but primarily because the real estate value of the readily accessible land increased. The company sold out of the endeavour in favour of buying nearer land for its plantations. So ended my attempts to manage a forest by classic systems. They took a bitter twist in the Black Summer of 2019-20 when Australia's worst bushfires swept through the houses and farms at Sarsfield where I had once grown coppice.



## LESLIE (LES) THOMAS ORTLIPP

By Peter McHugh

*This article is supplied by the author for publication in the AFHS newsletter. It is published on Victoria's Forests & Bushfire Heritage website at [victoriasforestsandbushfireheritage.com/2023/07/02/leslie-les-thomas-ortlipp](https://victoriasforestsandbushfireheritage.com/2023/07/02/leslie-les-thomas-ortlipp). The online version of the article has additional photos and newspaper articles.*

Les Ortlipp was born on 18 May 1925 at Culcairn in New South Wales but moved to Bright in NE Victoria in 1933 after his father died and his mother remarried.

Les left school aged 12 and took an apprenticeship at the local Jack Sharp's bakery.

When aged only 16, Les lied about his age to join the Army, but his mum found out and he was sent home. But about 12 months later in 1943 he joined again (# VX93307) and was sent overseas. He served as a machine gunner in New Guinea, the Islands, Halmaheras, Morotai and Borneo, before being accidentally sent to Japan with the American Occupation Forces. Les was discharged in 1947.

On his return to Australia, Les worked briefly for the Forests Commission Victoria (FCV) at Bright, before spending a couple of years as a guard on the Old Ghan railway between Quorn and Alice Springs.

After getting married at Quorn to Colleen, Les returned to Bright in March 1951 and resumed his job on the crew with the Forests Commission.

During the summer months from 1951-1956, Les worked as a fire lookout at Mount Clearspot overlooking the Ovens Valley Plantations. He rode his horse up each day to the summit. And until the late 1950s, there was no tower and not much shelter other than a couple of recycled Stanley Huts on just a bit of open ground, with a telescope mounted on a movable tripod.



*Les Ortlipp with his son Charles when he was fire spotting on Mount Clearspot south of Bright, c1950s.*

*Photo: supplied by Charles Ortlipp.*

During this period at Bright, Les became an active volunteer with the CFA and a foundation member of the local Civil Defence Branch (the forerunner to the State Emergency Service). Les also taught first aid as a St Johns volunteer and was one of the first ambulance drivers in the township.

Because he showed strong leadership skills and an aptitude for forestry and bushfire work, Les was selected, along with a number of others, to attend the 6-month forest foreman's school at Mount Disappointment near Broadford in 1962.

On completion of the course, and some short postings in other forest districts, Les returned to Bright in mid-1963 and was later appointed to a permanent Forest Overseer position in June 1965.

A bit like Warrant Officers in the Army, Forest Overseers with the commission were the people who led the works crew and made things happen. Whether it be remote firefighting, building a road or establishing a plantation, overseers were practical, reliable and down to earth men with a wealth of knowledge. They also guided many a young wet-behind-the-ears forestry school graduate.

But unlike foresters who were compulsorily moved around the state every few years to different districts, Forest Overseers tended to stay put in one place for long periods and so got to know their communities and their patch of forest better than many others.

Les was so familiar with the bush, the mountains, the landmarks and the tracks he was often called upon when the police needed assistance.

In 1980 and fit as a trout, Les, then aged 55, was the oldest competitor in the "king of the mountains" marathon running event to ascend Mount Bogong, Mount Porepunkah, Mount Feathertop, Mount Hotham and Mount Buffalo over five consecutive days.

Les was well known and well liked throughout the Forests Commission and became instantly recognisable for his trademark bushy mutton chops and moustache.

He spent the remainder of his career at Bright before retiring in late 1984, aged nearly 60. This was around the time of the major disruption and restructuring associated with the newly amalgamated Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (CFL). Many senior staff chose to leave which led to a massive loss of corporate knowledge and field experience.

The Forests Commission organised a farewell dinner for Les in November 1984. The District Forester Derrick Rolland together with senior FCV dignitaries including Commissioner Ron Gross, Chief of Forest Operations, Max Boucher and Divisional Forester Russ Ritche along with 60 guests attended. A gift included a collection of wood working tools. Les also became an avid photographer of the alps in later years.

The Bright Shire Council also organised a testimonial dinner in his honour a year later on 6 December 1985, after which Les and Colleen moved to a new home at Howlong near Albury.

Les Ortlipp later died in Melbourne on 17 April 2004 and his ashes were returned to Mount Clearspot.

*Thank you to Charles Ortlipp for his help with compiling this story.*

## JACKIE LEWIS – MMBW RANGER

By Peter McHugh

*This article is supplied by the author for publication in the AFHS newsletter. It is published on Victoria's Forests & Bushfire Heritage website at [victoriasforestsandbushfireheritage.com/2023/06/15/jackie-lewis-mmbw-ranger](https://victoriasforestsandbushfireheritage.com/2023/06/15/jackie-lewis-mmbw-ranger).*

*Jackie Lewis is also mentioned in a 2016 essay by Carolyn Rasmussen, "From the Significant to the Indispensable: The Working Lives of Seventeen Figures in the History of the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works", published by the Australian Dictionary of Biography at [adb.anu.edu.au/essay/20](https://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/20). Jackie is no. 12.*

Jackie Lewis began as a Ranger in 1924 with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) and worked in the remote Upper Yarra water catchments beyond Warburton and Woods Point.

The legendary "Iron Man" of the bush enjoyed the solitary nature of his work. As a champion long-distance runner Jackie was selected for the 1926 Australian Olympic team, and few could keep up with him anyway.

Foresters and bushmen often reported that he seemed to just appear, on foot, out of nowhere at their camps.

As I proceeded through the ash forest and rounded a bend, I was startled by a person on the downside of the road crouching over a black-fellow's fire in the vast cavity of a hollow log. This was Jackie Lewis – patrolman for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works whose duties required him to inspect the catchments to ensure trespass did not occur. This log was Lewis' first camp after a walk up from Marysville and he had similar bivouacs scattered throughout the watershed.

He was a legend for the distances he could walk. The story was told of how one evening in Warburton he had a party with two tourists. The tourists drove off next day to Moe and up into the mountains to Walhalla. At the hotel in Walhalla, they met a man at the bar who bore a strong resemblance to their friend of the previous night – Lewis. When asked, he astounded them by proving he was the same man – having walked from Warburton up the Yarra Valley, over the Baw Baw Plateau and across the Thomson Valley to Walhalla to surprise (and astound) his friends of the night before. – *Jim McKinty, Forest Assessor 1937-38.*

Jackie fought his first bushfire in 1910 and lost an eye when a blazing tree fell near him during the 1939 fires.

Trapped with a group of fifty men in the 1942 bushfires, he threatened to use his axe on anyone who tried to dash through the flames in the hope of reaching safety. They stayed – and survived.

But it was Jackie's intrepid, solo, five-week trek in April 1931 through some of Victoria's densest forest in search of the missing aircraft *Southern Cloud*, that earned him hero status.

On the way back he fell down a 12-metre precipice and had no choice but put three stitches in a gaping leg wound himself. It's said he stayed awake all night fending

off howling dingoes before dragging himself for hours the next day to the road. But he was back at work in a matter of days.

Searching for people hopelessly lost in dense bush was all part of the MMBW's service to the community and it's said that Lewis rescued over 70.

Jackie wrote about his adventures in an article "[My Job in the Big Bush](#)" for the Melbourne *Herald* in January 1933.

Jackie never carried a compass himself and when once called upon to help find a party of tourists lost near Mount Donna Buang, he told police exactly where they would be even before they set out.

In his spare time during winter, Jackie coached the Warburton football team or went skiing.

But sadly, Jackie Lewis died of a heart attack in 1956, aged 62, before he could achieve his retirement ambition ... a book based on his diaries in which he noted every trip, and especially the wildflowers of the area, on which he had become an authority.

Jackie, who was a naturalised Greek, died a few days after his brother, and was buried with him at Bundaberg in Queensland.

Later in 1963, the Warburton Advancement League erected memorial gates at the main entrance to the Camping Park at Warburton in his memory. He is also acknowledged on a set of murals next to the Warburton Water Wheel.



*Photo from "Warburton Ways"  
by Earle Parkinson, 1984.*



## VALE ALAN BROWN AM, FIFA, FTSE (1931-2023)

By John Turnbull

*This article first appeared in the June 2023 issue of FACTT News (no. 65), published by Friends of ACT Trees. It is reprinted with permission. Information on FACTT is available at [sites.google.com/site/factacanberra](https://sites.google.com/site/factacanberra) and [www.facebook.com/FACTTrees](https://www.facebook.com/FACTTrees).*

Alan Gordon Brown passed away on 19 May 2023. He was an accomplished forester and scientist with a national and an international reputation. After a highly successful career with CSIRO he became a great contributor to FACTT (Friends of ACT Trees).

Alan was born in 1931 to a farming family at Hilston in western NSW. The family moved to Canberra where he had his early education. He had a Commonwealth Forestry Scholarship at Sydney University 1948-1949 and attended the Australian Forestry School in Yarralumla in 1950-1951.

After a year working with the NSW Forestry Commission in the Southern Highlands, he joined the Forestry and Timber Bureau in 1953. Until 1960 he worked on silvicultural research and tree breeding including responsibility the arboreta in the ACT.

He improved the records of the arboreta by producing accurate maps and associated seed origin data.

Alan lectured in silviculture and wood science at the Australian Forestry School during 1961-1966 before returning to research at the newly-formed Forest Research Institute within the Forestry and Timber Bureau. He was heavily involved in breeding *Pinus radiata* and other closed-cone pines with the late Jack Fielding including world leading progeny testing and clonal reproduction. These studies contributed to his Master of Science degree.

His subsequent appointments included Deputy Chief CSIRO Division of Forestry and Forest Products 1988-1990 and Chief Division of Forestry 1991-1992. After retiring in 1996 Alan remained with CSIRO as an Honorary Research Fellow.

In Australia Alan was honoured with the Order of Australia (1998) and the Institute of Foresters' NW Jolly Medal (1986). He was a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science and Engineering, and the Institute of Foresters.

Internationally Alan was involved in several of ACIAR's collaborative forestry research projects in Africa and China. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and was on the Boards of both IUFRO (1987-1990) and the Center for International Forestry Research (1992-1997).

Alan was an accomplished editor who edited the *Australian Forestry* journal for many years. He authored several books and many scientific papers. He was a strong supporter of FACTT's activities and conducted Westbourne Woods walks. He also was largely responsible for the revised edition of the guide to *Westbourne Woods* and his final publication was *Woods Wiki* in 2018.

Those of us fortunate enough to have had Alan as a friend and colleague appreciated the great depth of his forestry knowledge and the quiet, competent, and effective way he interacted with people. There are many in the forestry world who have been enriched by their association with him and have been saddened by his passing.



Alan Brown in his younger days.



Alan Brown (right) with John Turnbull (left) and Paul Scholtens (centre).



Alan Brown and Steve Thomas.

## ABC NEWS: ITALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR WHO WORKED ON SOUTH-EAST SA FARMS AND FORESTS IN WWII REMEMBERED

By Liz Rymill, ABC South East SA

*This article was published by the ABC on 17 June 2023 and is used with permission of Ms Rymill, obtained by AFHS member Rob Robinson. The original article at [www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-17/italian-prisoners-of-war-wwii-camps-south-east-sa-remembered/102488808](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-17/italian-prisoners-of-war-wwii-camps-south-east-sa-remembered/102488808) includes some additional photos that aren't reproduced here.*

*Many of the photos in the original article were supplied by Jeff Holly and Peter Dunn OAM. Mr Dunn runs the Australia @ War site at [www.australiawar.com](http://www.australiawar.com). The two photos used here are included with Mr Dunn's permission.*

A few old slabs of concrete buried deep in pine forests, amid wildflowers and tall trees, are all that remain of south-east South Australia's prisoner of war (POW) camps.

But the history of the camps is being uncovered in new research that is shining a light on the stories of the men interned in the region nearly 80 years ago.

"Driving past Nangwarry, Wandilo and Rocky Camp [near Mount Burr], you'd never know these camps existed," said Mount Gambier History Group researcher Stephanie Edgeworth.

"There are no monuments or memorials, and only a handful of people know exactly where they were."

### Scouring the archives

During World War I and World War II, Australia held internees of German heritage, and during World War II of Italian heritage as well as POWs captured in the Northern African campaigns.

Internees were "enemy aliens" from countries at war with British allies including Australia.

Most were civilian men, but some women and children were also interned. Internees were held in regional camps around Australia.

"The terms 'prisoner' and 'internee' were often used for both groups, but they had different rights and authorities treated them differently," Mrs Edgeworth explained.

"In researching the three south-east camps, it's been fascinating to scour the archives, and to speak with some long-living locals who remember the men and who have really brought their stories to life," she said.

"I talked to Mr Bill Tye who is in his late 90s and who lived across the road from the POW internee camp at Wandilo. I also talked to Eddie Heaver, a former guard there."

The south-east wood camps were managed by the South Australian Department of Woods and Forests, which was enduring a labour shortage due to a workforce at war.

In early 1944 the first of the POWs arrived in the south-east, and about 200 were assigned to the wood camps.

The main camp, at Wandilo, housed about 50 Italian detainees at any one time in wood huts, as well as about 15 guards and an Italian-speaking medical staff member.



*Internees felling pine logs at Nangwarry Wood Camp near Mount Gambier in 1944.*

*Supplied: Jeff Holly and Peter Dunn, Australia @ War.*

"The wood camps were all unfenced, and after the war the buildings were dismantled and sold off," Mrs Edgeworth said.

"It was like it never happened, really."

### Italian men sent to work on local farms

Mrs Edgeworth said that aside from those in the wood camps tasked with pruning pine trees, 75 of the men were deemed "trustworthy" enough to work on local farms.

"There were two programs running; one was the wood camps and the other was the on-farm labour scheme, where the Italian men worked on farms that were in need of workers due to local men being away at war."



*A working party of Italian prisoners of war at Nangwarry Wood Camp in 1944.*

*Supplied: Jeff Holly and Peter Dunn, Australia @ War.*

Mrs Edgeworth said she had spoken to some of the farming families who had Italian POWs on their properties who described them as "hardworking and very family orientated".

"There were stories of shared meals, occasionally the POWs and internees attended local dances, they taught the families and the children Italian ... and singing was a big part of their 'down time' – a lot of the men had big, beautiful voices," she said.

"Of the men who worked on the farms, some of them maintained contact with the families after the war because they'd built such strong bonds.

"Some farm families even sponsored the men to return to Australia as migrants years later."

But not all the experiences were happy, she said.

"There was a sad case where one of the men from the Nangwarry camp had heard that his wife and children had been killed in a bombing raid in Italy.

"He became very despondent, understandably so, and was moved on by authorities."

### ***Bonds built in trying times***

Mrs Edgeworth said local families with POWs working on their farms were required to give them board and lodging, as well as three meals a day.

"They were permitted to go up to one mile from the farm on Sundays so they would gather together on that day and sing, cook and also take part in faith activities," she said.

"They'd catch rabbits and cook them, they'd make spaghetti over open fires and just enjoy being together."

Mrs Edgeworth said the experience of POWs compared to internees was different.

Internees were allowed to come into the towns and attend church services at the Catholic parish in Mount Gambier.

"The internees were naturalised Australians and many had lived in Australia for 40 or more years but still they were interned," Mrs Edgeworth said.

"They felt Australian but they were being treated as enemies.

"The POWs had to remain on site at the camps – sometimes the Catholic priest attended the camps to give a service, but not regularly."

### ***Men of the camps remembered***

Mrs Edgeworth said there was happy as well as sad tales.

"I talked to a lady who lived out at Kalangadoo who remembers having a POW working on her farm," she said.

"She recalled part of his story, particularly how engaged he was with the farm children – he loved entertaining them and they found him fascinating, and even learned some Italian language from him."

"He spent his evenings in his rudimentary quarters on the farm cutting up tobacco pouches into tiny cellophane strips and then plaiting them into belts to give away.

"He also made a belt buckle out of the zinc from the toothpaste tubes.

"And another man crafted rings out of sixpence and two-shilling pieces."

### ***The long road home***

Today, the communities of the south-east are full of Italian history and heritage, but Mrs Edgeworth said remembering the stories of the men of the camps and

farm worker scheme was "an important part of living history" for the region.

"There are stories of resilience and endurance, of toil, of togetherness and even love."

The camps and rural workers scheme continued until April 1946 due to ongoing labour shortages and a lack of ships to get the Italians home.

They were taken to Loveday Camp in the Riverland to await repatriation ships in November 1946.

"A lot of the Italian POWs were captured in 1940 ... and they spent about four years being moved around before making their way to the south-east camps," Mrs Edgeworth said.

"They didn't get home until 1947, so they had a really long time away from their families."

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION – PRISON FORESTS**

*By Fintán O Laighin*

We recently received a query from Jared Davidson, author of the recently published *Blood & Dirt: Prison Labour and the Making of New Zealand*, who writes that:

"... (the book) features a chapter on the afforestation work of prisoners from 1901 to c.1921 (although it continued in various forms, and does so to this day). Something I didn't pursue in that chapter was whether New Zealand was the first country in the world to use prisoners for afforestation.

Benedict Taylor notes the forestry camps in NSW from 1913:

[www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key\\_docs/taylor-14-4.pdf](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/taylor-14-4.pdf). And Andrew Gill has written about prison forestry at Hamel Penal Out Camp in Western Australia around 1902. It seems to me these were based on the New Zealand example, but I wondered if you (or your members) had come across any other examples of prison forestry in Australia between 1902 and 1913, or earlier."

(Benedict Taylor's 2010 thesis, *Prisons without walls: prison camps and penal change in Australia, c.1913 – c.1975*, is at

[unsworks.unsw.edu.au/entities/publication/84759a7f-3b83-484c-8ec0-b554f49a1509](http://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/entities/publication/84759a7f-3b83-484c-8ec0-b554f49a1509). He also presented a paper at the AFHS conference in 2007 – "Trees of Gold and Men Made Good? Grand Visions and Early Experiments in Penal Forestry in New South Wales, 1913-1938" [doi.org/10.3197/096734008X368439](https://doi.org/10.3197/096734008X368439).)

In his reply to Jared, Peter Evans noted that "The Forests Commission Victoria (established 1919) destroyed most of the files of its predecessor, the Victorian Department of Forests (1908-1919). I have an index of those files that survived, and none mention prisons or prisoners. A summary of the VDF was prepared by Maurice Carver, and none of his volumes mentions prisons or prisoners."

Peter was able to provide some information on the Coorimungle prison farm in 1939 where minimum



security prisoners were used to prepare land for farming to be sold to potential settlers. He notes that at least some of the timber on the land was used in the prison farm's own sawmill (citation Evans, P. (in prep) *Tramways to Timboon: the rails and resources of the Haytebury Forest*).

Some examples in NSW are listed below:

- From 1913 to 1927, there was an afforestation camp at Tuncurry on the mid north coast ([midcoaststories.com/2018/06/tuncurry-reafforestation-prison-camp](https://midcoaststories.com/2018/06/tuncurry-reafforestation-prison-camp));
- From 1927 to 1939, there was also one at Mila (near Bombala) in the south-east ([southeasttimberassociation.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/A-Short-History-of-the-Brookfield-Afforestation-Camp-Mila.pdf](https://southeasttimberassociation.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/A-Short-History-of-the-Brookfield-Afforestation-Camp-Mila.pdf)); and
- From 1957 to 1995, the Leslie Nott Afforestation Camp operated at Tumbarumba on the south-west slopes and is now a function and conference centre ([www.laurelhillforestlodge.com.au/about-us](https://www.laurelhillforestlodge.com.au/about-us)).

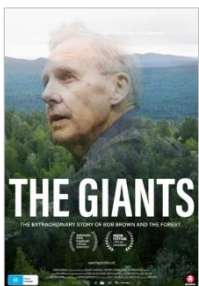
While beyond the scope of Jared's query, prisoners were used in the timber industry in the colonial era, moreso for timber cutting and sawing rather than afforestation – the forest would have seemed endless and afforestation would not have been a consideration for years. Port Arthur in Tasmania was originally a government timber camp, although may not have used prisoners ([www.tasmap.tas.gov.au/do/product/HISTCHART/PORTARTH6](https://www.tasmap.tas.gov.au/do/product/HISTCHART/PORTARTH6)). John Dargavel's 1982 PhD thesis includes a chapter titled "Timber Production in the Prison Farm Mode" ([openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/143455/2/b1318930x\\_Dargavel\\_J\\_B.pdf](https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/143455/2/b1318930x_Dargavel_J_B.pdf)).

If anyone can help Jared with his query, his e-mail is [garage.collective@gmail.com](mailto:garage.collective@gmail.com).

Jared was put into touch with us by Professor Michael Roche of Massey University in New Zealand.

## THE GIANTS: THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF BOB BROWN AND THE FOREST

*From the film distributor's notes.*



*The Giants* explores the intertwined fates of trees and humans in a poetic portrait of environmentalist Bob Brown and the forest.

From a seedling to forest elder: the film is a masterclass that draws on Bob's 50 years of inspiring activism, from the Franklin campaign for Tasmania's last wild river, to today's

battle for the Tarkine rainforest. Told in Bob's own words, his story is interwoven with the extraordinary life cycle of Australia's giant trees, brought to the screen with stunning cinematography and immersive animated forest landscapes.

<https://thegiantsfilm.com>

## FERDINAND VON MUELLER CORRESPONDENCE LAUNCH

*By Alessandro Antonello*

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Victoria, has recently launched a website with over 11,500 pieces of correspondence from Ferdinand von Mueller, the influential Victorian Government Botanist and Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. The von Mueller Correspondence Project was initiated in 1987, and this new searchable website – which includes translations into English of letters in other languages – is a major resource for the history of science and environmental history in Australia.

Have some research fun at: [vmcp.rbg.vic.gov.au](https://vmcp.rbg.vic.gov.au).

*This article was first published by the Australian & Aotearoa New Zealand Environmental History Network at [www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2023/07/ferdinand-von-mueller-correspondence-launch](https://www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2023/07/ferdinand-von-mueller-correspondence-launch). Dr Antonello of Flinders University is the website and newsletter editor.*

## ROBERT ONFRAY'S BLOGS

Robert Onfray continues his accounts on three different topics each month – stories about Surrey Hills (Tasmania), travelling around Australia, and forestry/land management issues. While the AFHS newsletter tends to focus on the Surrey Hills and forestry blogs, his travel articles are also worth checking out. His website is at [www.robertonfray.com](https://www.robertonfray.com) and includes details of how to subscribe to his e-mail list.

The following articles have been published since our April 2023 issue.

### *Surrey Hills*

- April:** [The pastoralist's scourge](#)  
**May:** [A bushman and his dogs](#)  
**June:** [Training for bombing raids that never came](#)  
**July:** [Surveying on Surrey Hills Part 2 – From Chain to GPS](#)  
**August:** [More memories of growing up in Guildford](#)

### *Forestry/Land Management*

- May:** [Proof that species are declining in our reserves set up to protect them](#)  
**June:** [Stealing a mountain – a warning for all of us](#)  
**June (no. 2):** [The truth behind the rainforest battles in NSW \(part 1\) – the historical background](#)  
**July:** [The truth behind the rainforest battles in NSW \(part 2\) – a growing awareness of rainforests](#)  
**August:** [The truth behind the rainforest battles in NSW \(part 3\) – science means nothing in politics](#)

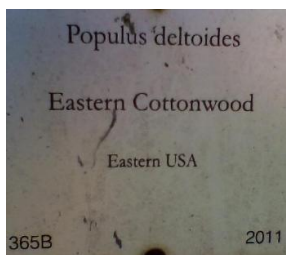
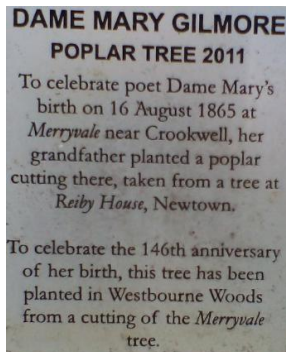
Robert's 2021 book, *Fires, Farms and Forests: A Human History of Surrey Hills, north-west Tasmania*, can be ordered from his website for a cost of \$55 plus postage.

## THE DAME MARY GILMORE TREE AT WESTBOURNE WOODS, YARRALUMLA, ACT

By Fintán Ó Laighin

Westbourne Woods began as the larger part of the Yarralumla Nursery complex established in 1913 by Charles Weston, the officer-in-charge of afforestation of the new capital.

The Friends of ACT Trees (FACTT) hold walks on the second Sunday of the month. A walk in July 2023 went past a poplar tree planted in 2011 to honour the 146th anniversary of the birth of Dame Mary Gilmore, the woman on Australia's \$10 banknote.



Photos by Juliana Lazzari.



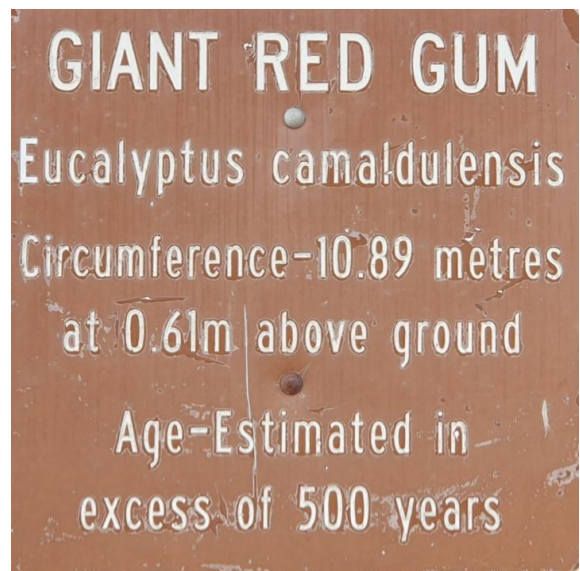
The two versions of the \$10 note featuring Dame Mary Gilmore:  
Top – 1993-2017; Bottom – 2017-present.

Both images courtesy of the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Information on FACTT and the monthly walks through Westbourne Woods is available at [sites.google.com/site/factacanberra](https://sites.google.com/site/factacanberra) and [www.facebook.com/FACTTrees](https://www.facebook.com/FACTTrees).

## GIANT RED GUM AT ORROROO, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

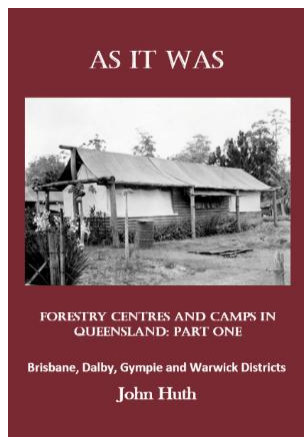
Submitted by Peter Evans



**Editor's note:** The tree is listed on the National Register of Big Trees [www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au/listing/158.pdf](http://www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au/listing/158.pdf). In 2010, Dean Nicolle recorded it as having a circumference of 9.9m (breast height), 23m high and a crown of 24m.



## NEW BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



John Huth, 2023. *As It Was. Forestry Centres and Camps in Queensland: Part One. Brisbane, Dalby, Gympie and Warwick Districts.* Self-published. Price \$30 + \$12 p&p (see details at end on how to order).

Review by Peter Kanowski Snr.

This is the third book written and published by John Huth and covers

aspects of Forestry in Queensland when they were under the control of the Queensland Department of Forestry. His previous books, *As Things Were* and *As We Were* published in 2022, were reviewed by Ian Bevege in the April and September 2022 Australian Forest History Society (AFHS) newsletters.

The 1999 AFHS Conference in Gympie Queensland prompted local members of AFHS to remedy the lack of published Forestry history in Queensland. In 2001-02, oral histories of at least 40 retired Forestry personnel (including conservators, field and clerical staff, and Forestry wives) were recorded and stored in the John Oxley Library in Brisbane. Peter Holzworth then wrote a number of articles about early Queensland forestry pioneers including Harold Swain, Victor Grenning and Alan Trist. He published three books on the history of Forestry in Queensland: *Jacky Howes and Crown Hammers* in 2010; *The Dog on a Log* in 2012; and *The Voice of Women in Forestry: Their Stories* in 2015. John Huth, then a forest technician in the Department's Research Division, was inspired by Peter Holzworth to try his hand as a historian. Favourable reviews of his first two books encouraged John to write his third book, *As It Was: Part One*. This book is a historical account of Forestry centres and camps in southern Queensland.

The first short section details the development of Forestry administration and is a handy guide for the period 1900-2023.

The next section covers the development of accommodation for Forestry staff from primitive tents to barracks, and highlights the efforts made by the Australian Workers' Union to improve living standards for its members. Of particular interest is the change of accommodation standards for the wives and families who lived in these camps.

The major section of the book, over 200 pages, deals with the location of District offices and Forestry centres in the Brisbane, Dalby, Gympie and Warwick Forestry Districts of Queensland. The descriptions are well supported by maps and photographs.

The major value of the book is its accurate historical record of the development of important aspects of Forestry in southern Queensland, information which

John has obtained from contacts who experienced the conditions and from written and photographic records still obtainable. It shows how Forestry management grew from small bush areas to major plantation areas. It records "the glory days" of Forestry in Queensland from the late 1940s to the early '80s. We are thankful that John has recorded the evidence of those days when timber sales from plantations and native forests were bringing in large profits.

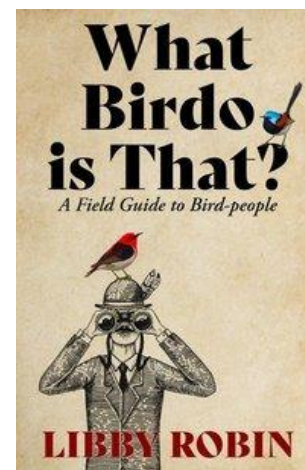
I look forward to the publication of Part Two, which will cover other Queensland Forestry Districts.

To order a copy please e-mail your address to [johnhuth55@gmail.com](mailto:johnhuth55@gmail.com) or phone 0428 735 132.

Cost is \$30 pickup from Little Mountain, Caloundra or \$42 including postage.

Books 1 and 2 are still available for \$30 each, plus postage. Two books will cost \$75 (including postage) and three books \$110.

Payment can be made by direct deposit – contact John Huth for details.



Libby Robin, 2023. *What Birdo is That? A Field Guide to Bird-people.* Melbourne University Press. 272pp. ISBN 9780522879346. Price \$40.

[www.mup.com.au/books/what-birdo-is-that-paperback-softback](http://www.mup.com.au/books/what-birdo-is-that-paperback-softback).

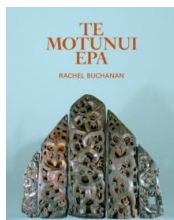
From the publisher's notes.

Birds and the humans who love them.

The idea that a bird is good news and needs all our support is probably the only thing amateur birdos, professional zoologists and "birdscapers" – people who redesign their gardens to support birdlife – have in common. But together they form a conservation community that cares about the future of birds and their habitats, who are working to heal the damage wrought by those who don't notice birds. *What Birdo is That?* reveals how bird-people in Australia have gone about their craft across the years. Its stories come from wild places – at sea as well as on the land – from dusty archives, from restoration projects, gardens and urban wastelands. They are human stories, but the birds themselves interject and interrupt any self-important anthropocentrism. They educate. They counter the imperialism of the ever-expanding economies of the new millennium. They turn up in unexpected places, giving surprise and joy. This field guide to Australia's bird-people provides a basis for understanding the complex relationship between people and birds in a land of extremes at the forefront of changing climate and habitats.



Thanks to Michael Roche for info on the following books about New Zealand. If there are any New Zealand books mentioned in the newsletter, it's almost always due to Professor Roche.



Rachel Buchanan, 2022. *Te Motunui Epa*. Bridget Williams Books. 252pp. ISBN 9781990046582. Price NZ\$49.99. [www.bwb.co.nz/books/te-motunui-epa](http://www.bwb.co.nz/books/te-motunui-epa).

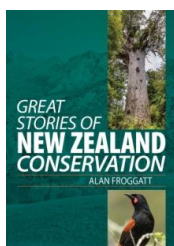
*From the publisher's notes.*

This is a story about the power of art to help us find a way through the darkness. It is about how art can bring out the best in us, and the worst. The artworks in question are five wooden panels carved in the late 1700s by ancestors in Taranaki.

This stunning book examines how five interconnected carved panels, *Te Motunui Epa*, have journeyed across the world and changed practices, understanding and international law on the protection and repatriation of stolen cultural treasures.

The story begins in the early 1800s in Peropero swamp, just north of Waitara. Taranaki was teetering on the edge of what would be almost a century of war, and *Te Ātiawa* hapū moved quickly to dismantle their most important public buildings and hide significant pieces in the swamps. The *epa* – serpentine figures carved in five tōtara panels – went to sleep, only to awaken one hundred and fifty years later to hands that would take them to New York, Geneva, London and the Royal Courts of Justice.

By placing these taonga/tūpuna at the centre of the story, Rachel Buchanan (Taranaki, *Te Ātiawa*) presents a vivid narrative, richly illustrated, that draws on newly released government records to tell a story of art, ancestors and power.



Alan Froggatt, 2023. *Great Stories of New Zealand Conservation*. White Cloud Books (Upstart Press). 208pp. ISBN: 9781776940066. Price NZ\$39.99.

[upstartpress.co.nz/product/great-stories-of-new-zealand-conservation](http://upstartpress.co.nz/product/great-stories-of-new-zealand-conservation).

*From the publisher's notes.*

New Zealand has an extraordinary range of plants and animals, yet many species are heading towards extinction. The arrival of humans to the country, and the predators we brought with us, has pushed the natural world to the brink.

But while we are the villains of the story, we can also be heroes.

In *Great Stories of New Zealand Conservation*, author Alan Froggatt tells 50 inspiring and thought-provoking stories from right across the motu.

Some projects have been locally led, while others have been driven by national organisations – such as saving the kakapo and the yellow-eyed penguin. In every chapter there are real life New Zealanders, who care passionately about our environment.



Jared Davidson, 2023. *Blood & Dirt: Prison Labour and the Making of New Zealand*. Bridget Williams Books. 304pp. ISBN 9781991033406. Price NZ\$49.99.

[www.bwb.co.nz/books/blood-and-dirt](http://www.bwb.co.nz/books/blood-and-dirt).

*From the publisher's notes.*

Picture, for a minute, every artwork of colonial New Zealand you can think of. Now add a chain gang. Hard labour men guarded by other men with guns. Men moving heavy metal. Men picking at the earth. Over and over again. This was the reality of nineteenth-century New Zealand.

Forced labour haunts the streets we walk today and the spaces we take for granted. The unfree work of prisoners has shaped New Zealand's urban centres and rural landscapes and *Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa* – the Pacific – in profound and unsettling ways. Yet these stories are largely unknown: a hidden history in plain sight.

*Blood and Dirt* explains, for the first time, the making of New Zealand and its Pacific empire through the prism of prison labour. Jared Davidson asks us to look beyond the walls of our nineteenth- and early twentieth-century prisons to see penal practice as playing an active, central role in the creation of modern New Zealand. Journeying from the Hōhi mission station in the Bay of Islands through to Milford Sound, vast forest plantations, and on to Parliament itself, this vivid and engaging book will change the way you view New Zealand.

**Editor's note:** As mentioned on p11 of the newsletter, "*Blood & Dirt*" features a chapter on the afforestation work of prisoners from 1901 to c.1921.



Robert Vennell, 2023. *The Forgotten Forest: In Search of the Lost Plants and Fungi of Aotearoa*. HarperCollins. 288pp. ISBN 9781775492504. Price \$18.99.

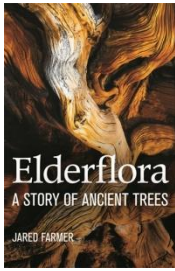
[www.harpercollins.com.au/9781775492504/the-forgotten-forest](http://www.harpercollins.com.au/9781775492504/the-forgotten-forest).

*From the publisher's notes.*

A guide to the spectacular oddities of the New Zealand forest, by the bestselling author of *The Meaning of Trees* and *Secrets of the Sea*.

Deep in the forest, in places you would never think to look, are some of the most remarkable creatures. Overlooked and unsung, this is the forgotten forest: a world of glow-in-the-dark mushrooms and giant mosses, where slime moulds travel the forest in search of prey and ancient lichens live for thousands of years.

Join bestselling author Robert Vennell on a walk through this fantastical forest, wandering through tales from history, science, and spirituality in search of these weird and wonderful species. Filled with beautiful historical artworks and illustrations, *The Forgotten Forest* is a celebration of the little things that pass us by and will forever transform a simple walk in the bush.



Jared Farmer, 2022. *Elderflora: A Story of Ancient Trees*. Picador (Pan Macmillan). 448pp. ISBN: 9781035009053. Price \$36.99. [www.panmacmillan.com.au/9781035009053](http://www.panmacmillan.com.au/9781035009053).

*From the publisher's notes.*

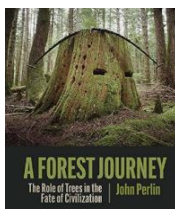
The epic story of the planet's oldest trees and the making of the modern world.

Humans have always revered long-lived trees. But as historian Jared Farmer reveals in *Elderflora*, our veneration took a modern turn in the eighteenth century, when naturalists embarked on a quest to locate and precisely date the oldest living things on earth. The new science of tree time prompted travellers to visit ancient specimens and conservationists to protect sacred groves. Exploitation accompanied sanctification, as old-growth forests succumbed to imperial expansion and the industrial revolution.

Taking us from Lebanon to New Zealand to California, Farmer surveys the complex history of the world's oldest trees, including voices of Indigenous peoples, religious figures, and contemporary scientists who study elderflora in crisis. In a changing climate, a long future is still possible, Farmer shows, but only if we give care to young things that might grow old.

Combining rigorous scholarship with lyrical writing, *Elderflora* chronicles the complex roles ancient trees have played in the modern world and illuminates how we might need old trees now more than ever. Historian Jared Farmer tells the globe-spanning story of humanity's deep fascination with the oldest living trees, the lessons in survival they offer us, and how to alter our behaviour so that the young trees of today can become ancient themselves.

Jared Farmer is the Walter H. Annenberg Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. A former Andrew Carnegie Fellow, he is the author of several books, including *On Zion's Mount*, which won the Francis Parkman Prize of the Society of American Historians.



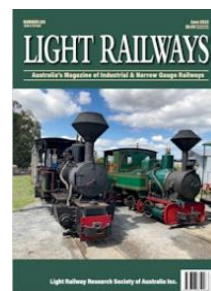
John Perlin, 2023. *A Forest Journey: The Role of Trees in the Fate of Civilization*. Patagonia. 520pp. ISBN: 9781938340970. Price US\$38. [www.patagonia.com/product/a-forest-journey-the-role-of-trees-in-the-fate-of-civilization/BK895.html](http://www.patagonia.com/product/a-forest-journey-the-role-of-trees-in-the-fate-of-civilization/BK895.html).

*From the publisher's notes.*

Trees have been the principal fuel and building material of every society over the millennia, from the time hunters and gatherers first settled until the middle of the nineteenth century. Without vast supplies of wood from forests, the great civilizations of the world would have never emerged. Wood's abundance or scarcity greatly shaped the culture, demographics, economies, internal and external politics, and technology of successive societies over the millennia.

Originally published in 1986 and updated in 2005, *A Forest Journey's* comprehensive coverage of the major role forests have played in human life – told with grace, fluency, imagination, and humor – gained it recognition as a Harvard Classic in Science and World History and as one of Harvard's "One Hundred Great Books". This is a foundational conservation story that should not be lost in the archives. This updated and expanded edition emphasizes the importance of forests in the fight against climate chaos and the urgency to protect what remains of the great trees and forests of the world.

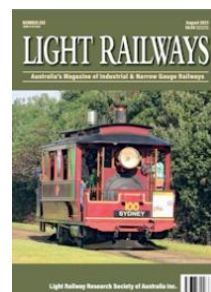
*Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways*, June 2023 (LR291) and August 2023 (LR292). Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN 0727 8101. [www.lrrsa.org.au](http://www.lrrsa.org.au) and [www.facebook.com/groups/LightRailwaysAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LightRailwaysAustralia).



LR291 starts with a feature article by Norman Houghton titled "Ebb and Flow – Beech Forest Rail Traffic Patterns 1928 to 1954". The line ran from Colac to the Otway Ranges in Victoria, opening in 1902 and closing in 1962 after having been truncated in 1954. It was a lifeline to the communities due to the poor condition of the roads. As

Houghton states, the town of Beech Forest "reached its peak from 1919 to 1925 when the district was one of Victoria's premier sawmilling areas". Farm supplies were carried inwards, and farm produce and timber outwards, and passengers both ways. The article explores the effects of changes to rail traffic patterns in the mid-1920s, including ones arising from improvements to the road network which changed the line irrevocably. The article is well-illustrated with photos and reproductions of timetables.

Much of the line has been converted into the Old Beechy Rail Trail which opened in October 2005. More info at <https://oldbeechyfriends.asn.au>.



The Goodwood Timber Tramway in Victoria is the subject of an article by Nick Anchen in LR292. The line opened in 1923 and ran west from Noojee to Goodwood through the Latrobe Valley.

Built by the Goodwood Timber Company, the 14 mile line was used to transport sawn timber from the

Goodwood sawmill and other mills to the Victorian Railways line at Noojee. The line was closed following the 1939 bushfires. The article is drawn from research which the author compiled for his forthcoming book on the Warburton, Noojee and Powelltown railways, *Whistles Through the Tall Timber*, which will be published in November 2023.

**Editor's note:** All back issues of *Light Railways* are available from the LRSSA's website, either as free downloads (nos. 1 to 275) or for \$7.95 or \$8.95 each (nos. 276 to 292).