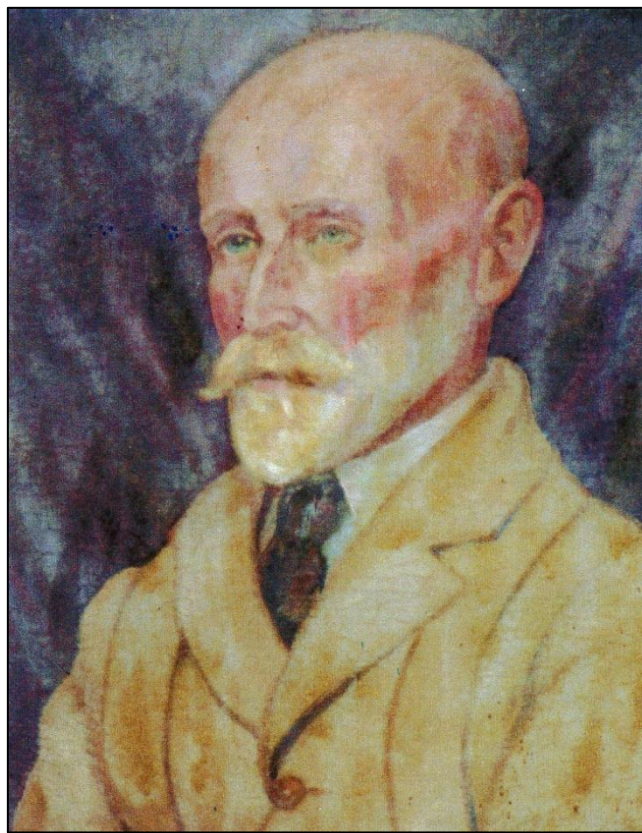




Australian Forest History Society

Newsletter No.91
April 2024

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



Edward Phillips Turner

Image courtesy Michael Roche.

See "Edward Phillips Turner's 1935 tour of Japanese Forests", pp 3-7.

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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 August 2024.

Input is always welcome.

Contributions can be sent to contact@foresthistor.org.au.

Contributions may be edited.

SERIES EDITOR NOTE

Thank you to Peter Evans for compiling this issue of the newsletter. He has made the April issue each year his own. In addition to editing an issue of our newsletter, Peter is also a prolific author and this issue includes a short article on him having received a commendation in the 2023 Victorian Community History Awards for his book *Wooden Rails & Green Gold* which was published last year. He is already writing his next book, on the Heytesbury Forest in Victoria.

Our annual general meeting will be held in November and members are encouraged to get involved in the running of the society. Our president, Juliana Lazzari, has indicated that she will be stepping down. She always regarded herself as an interim president and only agreed to take on the role at the 2020 AGM after the position had been left vacant in 2019-20. At some stage we may have to consider the future of the society if we don't have people to run it. It's a problem that afflicts many volunteer-run organisations.

Anyway, not wanting to end on a gloomy note, this issue is jam-packed with contributions from across Australia and New Zealand, starting with Mike Roche's article on Edward Phillips Turner, followed by pieces on the ACT, Victoria, NSW, South Australia and Tasmania Almost the entire federation.

Thanks also to Robert Onfray for getting the newsletters onto the AFHS website, and to Juliana Lazzari for her help with the final edit of this issue, a role she often performs but which is usually uncredited.

EDWARD PHILLIPS TURNER'S 1935 TOUR OF JAPANESE FORESTS

By Michael Roche

Introduction

In 1935, Edward Phillips Turner, the retired Director of New Zealand's State Forest Service (SFS), spent six weeks from September to November on a forest tour of Japan. This visit occurred at a time when foresters in New Zealand (NZ) and Australia tended to look to British imperial or continental European forestry as models (Swain's "heretical" US inspirations excepted). This note revisits his journey, considers his itinerary, and reflects on the place Japan occupied in Phillips Turner's "forest sense".

Career and "Retirement"

UK-born Edward Phillips Turner (1865-1937) migrated with his parents to NZ before shifting to Tasmania where he qualified as a surveyor in 1887, later working in NSW, then moving to the NZ Department of Lands in 1892. Through his survey work in the forests, he developed real competence as a field botanist. In 1907 he was appointed Inspector of Scenic Reserves. Next, he assisted Dr Leonard Cockayne on a botanical survey of Tongariro National Park (*AJHR*, 1908, C11). On the strength of that report, he undertook a similar survey of forested country to the west of Tongariro published as *Botanical Examination of the Higher Waimarino District* (*AJHR*, 1909, C11). In 1913 he was appointed secretary to the Royal Commission on Forestry. Implementation of its recommendations was delayed by WWI, till 1919 when a Forests Department was established with Phillips Turner as Secretary. Canadian forester L.M. Ellis was appointed as Director in 1920 and a new Forests Act passed in 1921. On Ellis' resignation to shift to the private sector in NSW in 1928, Phillips Turner was appointed Director of Forests, retiring in 1931. He was an exemplary civil servant avoiding any personal public comment on forest policy.

In "retirement" Phillips Turner remained involved in forestry. Most benignly he provided a commentary on the SFS annual reports for the *Empire Forestry Journal* (E.P.T., 1933, 1934, 1936). More controversially from the SFS viewpoint, particularly for his successor A.D. McGavock who was critical of any claims made by afforestation companies, Phillips Turner supported Timberlands Woodpulp Ltd figures of £3 per acre establishment costs with maintenance over 20 years of £3500 p.a. at 4.5% (Phillips Turner to Corbin, 31 March 1932). Publicly and privately, he opposed the government's plan to merge the SFS and Lands Department in 1932. In 1935 as President of the NZ Forestry League (NZFL), an elitist lobby group influential in the creation of a Forests Department in 1919, he gave an address which lamented public and political indifference to forestry matters, a false belief that future timber supplies were assured from plantations, while stressing that further scientific research was essential, the need for forest conservation was ongoing, and that control of deer numbers was essential. More generally he was critical of the deforestation that

had taken place in NZ, which he attributed to some flaw in Anglo-Saxon character. He made his will at this point leaving £100 to the NZFL to fund an essay competition for schools (Phillips Turner, 1935). After his return from Japan, he also discussed the relationship between scenic reserves and national parks; these types of protected areas remained under Lands Department administration and had not been passed to the SFS – as Ellis had hoped in 1921. He pointed to some deficiencies in the definition of their purpose (Phillips Turner, 1936). Hardly the *bete noir* of the SFS, but freed from public service restrictions, Phillips Turner voiced opinions about forest policy some of which were not appreciated by his former colleagues.

Visiting Japan

China was used as a warning for conservationists in NZ, particularly with regards to accelerated soil erosion and flooding (Sveding and Beattie, 2023) but Japan offered more positive lessons. Phillips Turner inspected Japanese forests at the invitation of the Japanese Government. At the time there were minimal forestry contacts between Japan and NZ, although there were some of note. In 1915, for example, the NZ Commissioner at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco forwarded a Bureau of Forestry of Japan bulletin to noted Canterbury tree planter T.W. Adams (T.W. Adams papers 4/4). There were various seed exchanges including in 1926 *Cryptomeria japonica* (Japanese Cedar) and *Larix leptolepis* (Japanese Larch), gifted to the SFS for its experimental planting area in Westland. From 1927 to 1930, the SFS, under Phillips Turner's signature, purchased from the Yokohama Nursery Company *Pinus densiflora* (Japanese Red Pine) (11b 1927, 61b 1928), *Larix leptolepis* (121b 1928), and *Castanea japonica* (Japanese Chestnut) (121b 1930) (Silviculture – seeds).

In 1935 Japanese forestry was in an "industrial period", notwithstanding the existence of older local traditions stretching back to the 17th century. In the 1880s Japan sent students to study forestry at German universities but also to Nancy in France. European forestry acts were scrutinized. French legislation inspired the Japanese forest code of 1897 and German afforestation practices and sustained yield ideas were used as models for Japan (Paletto et al., 2008). Phillips Turner arrived at a time when Japanese timber production and consumption were approximately in balance at 22 million cubic meters and imports and exports were similarly equivalent at 4 million cubic meters. Over the next 5 years the production of firewood, charcoal, and timber all increased significantly (Cummings, 1956). Phillips Turner may have been unaware that the sector was so delicately balanced at the time of his visit.

The press reported Phillips Turner's return to Auckland on the *Niagara* from Sydney and Yokohama on the NYK Line *Kitano Maru*, though not his departure which was likely on the *Kamo Maru* also from Sydney. First class fares of £90 were advertised around this time. It appears that the visit was self-funded, but also that he arranged contacts with various Japanese foresters at the University of Tokyo. In responding to Alex Entrican, SFS Engineer-in-Forest Products later Director of Forests

(1939-1961), who was mainly interested in Japanese pulp and paper making, Phillips Turner acknowledged, "an obligation to write an article on Japanese forestry for the *Empire Forestry Journal*" (Phillips Turner to Entrican, 14 March 1936). Published in July 1937 as "Japanese forests and forestry", the paper provides few clues about the background to his visit. Its main point was that with Japanese forests and forestry little known in "British journals" his "observations and impressions" were intended to help fill a gap. In detail, the paper, well-illustrated by photographs, provided a national statistical summary along with policy and administrative details that drew heavily on official Japanese sources, particularly the *Bulletin of the Imperial Forestry Experimental Station* and the *Forestry Bulletin of Tokyo University*. It contained minimal details from his six-week tour, other than to say that in that time, "it was impossible to visit the very extensive forests in the whole of Japan" (Phillips Turner, 1937, 26) (Table 1).

A brief report in the Japanese forestry journal *Sanrin*, from 1936 provided more details about his itinerary. These included:

1. Pine afforestation of seashore for sand fixation in Muramatsu, Ibaraki prefecture
2. Forest experimental stations in Nikko, Gunma and Usui
3. Larch afforestation of Mt. Asama foothills
4. Forest of Mt. Yatsugatake
5. Royal Forest of Kiso
6. Sabo (erosion control works) in Tajimi, Gifu prefecture
7. Forests of Hakone and Mt. Fuji foothills
8. The endemic Hiba (*Thuyopsis*) forests of Aomori prefecture, and
9. Forestry in the Lake Towada district, Nifuna and Noshiro in Akita prefecture.

The *Sanrin* report also noted that Phillips Turner concluded his visit by giving a lecture on his impressions of Japanese forestry, as well as NZ forests and forestry. The text of this address has not been located.

More detail is to be found in his field notebook, a hard covered A5 book with observations written in pencil. Each second page was numbered, to 23 amounting to some 92 sides of closely written notes with later observations squeezed between earlier sentences so that some parts are difficult to read. There is, however, a pattern to the observations which tend to begin with collection of altitudinal, temperature, rainfall, soils and geological information as well as the main species, and their height and size, growth rate information and depending on the forest, details of working plans, harvesting strategies including examples of selection felling, planting techniques including stems per acre, planting to combat soil coastal erosion, sleeper extraction, and labour force numbers.

The field notebook covers only from 10 October till 4 November, leaving approximately a fortnight unaccounted for – one gap is from 25 to 30 October. Perhaps there was a further field notebook, perhaps he spent the remainder of his time in Tokyo working up his impressions and preparing for a final lecture before his

departure? Phillips Turner returned with over 50 photos and captions, various tables provided by Junjin Jurasaki the district "forestry expert" for Akito and Aomori (MS 309 Box 1 Folder 4) as well as other reports.

Table 1: Phillips Turner's Itinerary

Date	Day	Visiting	Host
October 1935			
10	Thurs	Kiyasumi Forest University of Tokyo Demonstration Area	Mr Inokuma, University of Tokyo
11	Fri	Kiyasumi Forest	
12	Sat	Kiyasumi Forest	
13	Sun	Private forest near Sanmu	Dr Warabi
14?	Mon	Meguro Forest Experimental Station	Dr M Fuioka
15	Tues	Muramatsu	
16	Weds	Nikko Shrine	
20	Sun	Yatsugatake Forest	
22	Tues	Kiso Imperial State Forest	Mr Dagui, Officer in Charge & logging specialist
23	Weds	Agematsu Railway Station on to Kisco Forest & Tajimi	Mr Dazai, Chief Forester of District
24	Thurs	Between Miyanoshita & Lake Yamanaka	
31	Thurs	Amori District State Forest	
November 1935			
1	Fri	Driving from Amori to Mount Hakkōda to Lake Towada	
2	Sat	Hayaguchi Forest Station & Timber Yard	
3	Sun	From State Forest to Meguru	
4	Mon	Megura Protection Forest	

Constructed from Japanese Forests Etc. MS 309 Box 5 Notebooks.

Phillips Turner took the opportunity to travel widely around Honshu. This included some places easily accessible from Tokyo such as Muramatsu and others 700km or more distant. But he was also travelling in late November when the weather was deteriorating. His visit to Noshiro took him to a place where he could see both large sawmills and seashore afforestation works.

Afforestation of dunes being a particular interest and he had previously helped translate Edouard Harle's notable 1914 French study into English (McIntyre and Phillips Turner, 1920).

Japanese forestry as metaphor

Back in NZ, Phillips Turner was interviewed by the press in February 1936 and in May gave an illustrated lecture to the Auckland branch of the NZ Institute, forerunner of the Royal Society of NZ. This was repeated under the auspices of the NZFL in Wellington two months later. From the various press reports, it is possible to see how he used Japan as a vehicle to highlight several NZ concerns and see how these were writ large as British imperial forestry problems.

His preliminary ideas were formed in the talk he gave prior to departing from Japan, and presumably took more concrete form on the return voyage. To NZ *Herald* reporters he made the following observations. First and foremost, he stressed that the Japanese people had "a forest sense" by which he meant, "they realise the many valuable functions performed by trees and the consequent national importance of conserving them and so managing them, that these functions will not be impaired in anyway" (Japan's Forests, 1936). Trees were planted on all land not profitable for farming and these forestlands now comprised 65% of Japan's land area. In NZ, the SFS in 1930 considered that there were 12.6 million acres of indigenous forest remaining in 1923, of which about 8 million acres were under SFS control. This compared very unfavourably with Japan, all indigenous forests amounting to 18% of land area. In addition to which by 1933 there were 393,998 acres of state exotic plantations and some 277,000 acres of company plantations, mainly *Pinus radiata*, in total about 1% of the land area (*AJHR*, C3 1933).

To reduce the risk of insect and fungal attacks in Japan no exotic species were planted. Under the Japanese Forest Act, the state had the power to make, in the public interest, any private forest a "protective forest". There was, he noted, a Japanese proverb "that to control the mountains is to control the rivers, a policy that has not been carried out in many cases in New Zealand". Indeed, all the positive attributes of Japanese forestry were selected to highlight NZ weaknesses. There was no forest sense, only an Anglo-Saxon antipathy and desire to fell forests, a continued expansion of the frontiers of pastoral farming onto forested hill country where profitability was doubtful and land degradation inevitable. A largely *Pinus radiata* monoculture was potentially vulnerable to insect and fungal attack. Though there were problems with an exotic wood wasp *Sirex noctilio* in 1927, peaking in the 1950s. This never reached the catastrophic levels that so alarmed Phillips Turner.

There was a written version of the Auckland Institute presentation, but no copy has been sighted in Phillips Turner's papers. From Powell's 1942 summary, the five main points, embellishing those previously made for the press, were that:

1. Successful forestry had long been practised in Japan with high timber yields being obtained.
2. Timber reserves amounted to 65% of the land area, a sign of their value.
3. Nothing was wasted, after sawing offcuts being made into charcoal, bark serving as thatch, and leaves as mulch.
4. Some 10% of Japanese forests were specifically for flood prevention and erosion control.
5. Japan was a world leader in forest conservation providing guidance for the British Empire.

In the *Empire Forestry Journal*, he reported very favourably on Japanese forestry. His only criticism was of the complex and divided administration of their forests which he considered "a national disadvantage" (Phillips Turner, 1937, 13). But otherwise, he was impressed; "the fundamental principle of forest management for all Japan

is that of sustained yield, together with the maintenance of public welfare" (Phillips Turner, 1937, 22). Japan also "leads the world" in the scale of plantation forestry (Phillips Turner, 1937, 19). He was struck by the efficiency of felling, sawing, tramway construction, and waste minimization for instance by charcoal making. He did acknowledge the importance of two German foresters who taught silviculture at Tokyo University in the 1880s but gave greater weight to what he termed a "true forest sense" (Phillips Turner, 1937, 23). This made the Japanese "more careful of their forests than the average pioneer Briton of his home" (Phillips Turner, 1937, 23). The *Empire Forestry Journal* paper simultaneously lauded Japan and was highly critical of British Empire wide forestry policy and practice – particularly that of NZ. He considered the 30-mile avenue of *Cryptomeria* leading to the Nikko Shrine "one of the tree wonders of the world" (Phillips Turner, 1937, 9), whereas in NZ pioneer settlement of forest land had barely run its course. He observed that British Empire foresters ought to note that the Japanese state could prohibit felling of forest on private land (with compensation provisions), that Japan employed 9000-10,000 forest officers whereas in NZ it was barely 120, that there were four university forestry departments and 10 special forestry schools when the two NZ university departments had been closed by 1934. He was likewise impressed with the number, scale, and expertise of Japan's forest research institutes.

The Japanese and NZ scenes were juxtapositioned in Phillips Turner's mind ([Table 2](#)). Japan's essential forestry strengths all highlighted weaknesses in NZ's forestry policy and practice.

Table 2: Japan's Forestry Strengths & NZ's Weaknesses

Japan as Exemplar	Sources of Phillips Turner's "Forest Anxiety"	Sphere
Sustained yield, together with the maintenance of public welfare	Large plantations but no thinning. Tendency to monocultures – risk of vulnerability	Forestry practice
Japan employed 9000-10,000 forest officers	SFS close to being reintegrated back into Lands Department in 1932	Institutional setting
	SFS survives but budget slashed	Institutional setting
	New Director of Forests does not believe in need for university-qualified foresters	Settler society privileges practical over theoretical
Four university forestry departments and 10 special forestry school grades	Both NZ university forestry schools closed by 1934	Scientific expertise undervalued

Japan as Exemplar	Sources of Phillips Turner's "Forest Anxiety"	Sphere
Numerous forest experimental research stations	Research wound down when problems of understanding indigenous regeneration and growth rates not understood	Scientific expertise undervalued
Timber reserves amounted to 65% of the land area	[by his data] 45% indigenous forest cover in 1840 reduced to 18% in 1930	Wasteful use - Myth of super abundance
10% of Japanese forests were specifically for flood prevention and erosion control.	Expansion of pastoral farming onto North Island hill country unfit for settlement Introduced deer damaging forest and cause erosion and down stream flooding	Wasteful use - Myth of super abundance
Efficiency of felling, sawing, tramway construction and waste minimization	Very wasteful felling and sawing [Entrican – SFS Engineer's study in 1923 – finished product 13% of forest]	Myth of super abundance
Japanese "Forest Sense" imbued throughout society	Anglo-Saxon pioneer mentality of forest as a mine to be exploited	Public sphere

Conclusion

Phillips Turner had been able to visit some Australian and British forests earlier in his career and had access to European and North American forestry literature, but the six weeks in Japan provided him with his first sustained engagement with forestry beyond NZ. This tour came a time when Phillips Turner, if not a little discouraged, was certainly concerned about the state of forestry in NZ. The sources of concern were found in both forestry policy and practice. The SFS itself had come close to being dissolved back inside the Lands Department in 1932. Having in Alexander McGavock, a Director of Forestry (1931-39), who was sceptical of the value of professionally-trained foresters hardly helped. The future of rapid state and private sector exotic plantation planting from 1925-34 posed problems. Accelerated soil erosion and flooding were becoming an issue. There was a lack of high-level political support once Sir Francis Bell left politics in 1931. Interest in the NZFL was languishing.

It is notable that on his return to NZ, Phillips Turner did not draw on the mass of technical detail he obtained from the Japanese forests and experimental stations. Instead, he concentrated on various broader forestry policies and practices that, by implication, might help improve the NZ scene. Fundamentally, however, Phillips Turner identified an Anglo-Saxon pioneer mentality as the underlying difficulty – a societal problem in which the efforts of minority groups such as the NZFL had made limited inroads. Yet Phillips Turner seemed optimistic that in the long run the "solution" to the pioneer mentality lay in replacing it with a "forest sense" – something he observed at first-hand in Japan. Lane Poole had earlier discussed a "forest consciousness" in

1920 and had a tempestuous career in Australian forestry; Owen Jones in Victoria referred to a "forest conscience" but was defeated by the land settlement lobby in the mid-1920s before departing for company plantation forestry in New Zealand. In 1937 Phillips Turner died unexpectedly. Whether his personal call for a public "forest sense", would have gained much purchase, seems problematic. Rather any emerging "forest sense" increasingly lay in the hands of non-governmental advocates such as the NZ Native Bird Protection Society (after 1935 Forest and Bird Protection Society) of which Phillips Turner was also a Vice President from 1929 until his death. A stronger preservationist lobby group was contesting the place of conservation as wise use embodied by the SFS. SFS staff no longer held positions on organisations such as NZFL or Forest and Bird. An early turning point was the future of Waipoua kauri forest – the last large remaining area of kauri (*Agathis australis*), heating up in the 1930s and not resolved until 1948. A generation on, by the 1970s the "forest sense" of an environmental movement would even position the NZ Forest Service as the enemy of true forest conservation.

Notes

1 acre equals 0.4034 hectares.

Acknowledgements

Professor Hiromichi Furuido (University of Tokyo) generously located and translated the article in *Sanrin*.

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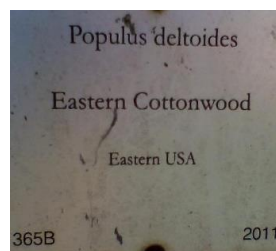
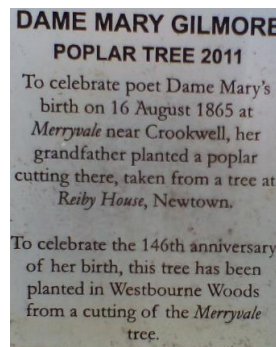
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THE DAME MARY GILMORE TREE AT WESTBOURNE WOODS, YARRALUMLA, ACT

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 each 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 <https://sites.google.com/site/factacanberra> and <https://www.facebook.com/FACTTtrees>.

AKD – A REGIONAL SUCCESS STORY

By Norman Houghton¹

Associated Kiln Driers Pty Ltd, or AKD Softwoods, was founded in 1955, with its head office based in Colac in Victoria.

The Otway state forests to the south of Colac had supplied timber since the earliest days of European settlement with small sawmills cutting timber for housing, construction, railway sleepers, case timbers for food packaging, and for fencing.

There was little or no value adding at these small bush sawmills, although a couple of hardware stores and timber yards in Colac made picture frames, doors, windows, architraves as well as mouldings.

The War Service Homes Commission built a mill at Gellibrand in the early 1920s to cut weatherboards, while Hayden Bros established a seasoning kiln and planing mill at Barwon Downs in 1933 which ran until 1944.

When the Second World War ended, the housing boom kicked in, and local Colac sawmillers became concerned at a potential loss of their markets. They were seeing their green sawn timbers leave the area for Geelong or Melbourne only to be kiln dried and dressed before coming back to Colac and being sold at a profit by others.

In 1948, local sawmillers George Bennett and Stan Inglis, together with timber merchant Harry Stephens, tossed around the notion of value adding kiln dried timber.



The founding members of AKD.

The technology had become available at reasonable cost to kiln dry wood, but none of the local businesses were large enough, so the idea of joint venture or co-operative started to take hold.

¹ While this story was originally commissioned by AKD it was never published by the company.

Norman owns the copyright and has generously made the document available to publish on the Victoria's Forestry Heritage website. It has been provided for publication in the AFHS newsletter by the website convener, Peter McHugh.

While it starts as a hardwood production story based on timber resources in the Otway Ranges, it soon transitions to a softwood production and softwood plantation expansion story from the early 1960s.

Nothing much came of this idea until early 1954 when the Forests Commission Victoria (FCV) started making noises.

But there were still concerns about Melbourne-based sawmillers moving in, so the local branch of the Victorian Sawmillers Association (VSA) was stirred into action and began canvassing other local sawmilling companies about the co-operative idea but with a variable response.

However, the CSIRO Division of Forest Products was engaged to assess the feasibility and planning for a new seasoning kiln while the commission examined how to allocate logs under a co-operative arrangement.

And so it came to pass, that on Melbourne Cup Day, 2 November 1954, George Bennett, Stan Inglis and Tom Prosser formed a new company to carry out kiln seasoning of local hardwoods at Colac.

And that was the start of AKD.

Membership of the new co-operative was open to any registered VSA sawmiller in the Southwest Branch who agreed to contribute sawn timber to the kiln for seasoning. Seven sawmill companies formally entered at a foundation board meeting held on 5 August 1955 and George Bennett was voted inaugural chairman.

The company then purchased a parcel of land at Colac East, an irregularly shaped block near the railway line within an existing sawmill precinct. The plans and specifications for the new works were devised by the CSIRO Division of Forest Products under the guidance of Hal Roberts.

Tenders were called which were awarded to Todd & Kerley in association with Kiln Installation and Equipment Pty Ltd and work commenced in March 1956.

There was an official opening on 28 February 1957 by the Hon. Gordon McArthur MLC, Minister of Forests (Victoria).

Together, the shareholders commanded around 16,500 cubic metres of hardwood sawlogs, all of which were coming from FCV allocations in the Otway state forests. The select grades of sawn timber were delivered into the AKD yard, principally as 6 x 1 inch boards.

Earlier in 1949, the Commonwealth Forestry and Timber Bureau proposed a national planting program to make Australia more self-reliant in timber after the shortages experienced during the Second World War.

The big leap for Victoria came in 1961, when the chairman of FCV, Alf Lawrence, attended the World Forestry Conference in São Paulo Brazil and, upon his return, took a bold decision to commit to a massive plantation expansion program which initiated nearly four decades of plantation establishment.

The commission's decision created a new wave of momentum and private investment optimism. The plantation area eventually reached a threshold where manufacturers could confidently establish major processing plants.

From 1961, the commission began to make its planned major cuts to hardwood log allocations from the Otways.

Commissioner Ben Benallack had warned the company from the outset that there was no strategic future in hardwoods and that it should move into softwood.

The writing was on the wall, so in August 1957 a test consignment of 100m³ of pine from the commission's Aire Valley plantation was dispatched for processing, but with disappointing results. Pine was re-examined in 1959 with a better outcome.

This marks AKD's strategic shift into pine and the lever to full pine dependence within a few years. But the transition to sawing, drying, processing and selling pine was not without its bumps and hurdles.

The long-term security of raw materials was always a major concern for AKD. Initially, logs were supplied from FCV plantations, some private sources as well as farm logs. AKD began acquiring land for its own plantations in 1972 and calculated that it needed to plant about 80 ha per year, every year, well into the future. By 1976 AKD held 1,000 ha and was aiming for 3,700 ha. It now owns a 12,000 ha radiata pine estate.

The company at Colac draws wood from the "Green Triangle" which spans the border area between South Australia and western Victoria. Other major growers include ForestrySA, Auspine, Hancock Victorian Plantations, Timbercorp and ITC.

The Green Triangle region grows around 160,000 ha of mature softwood plus another 110,000 ha of short-rotation hardwood plantations which were mostly established from the mid-1990s.

Victoria now has 382,600 ha of privately owned and managed plantations, making up nearly a quarter of the national total.

In the decades since its formation in 1955, AKD grew steadily and diversified to employ over 1100 people, own a large plantation estate, as well as six large scale sawmills across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland processing nearly 1 million m³ of logs. It also has three post and preservation businesses, an export operation in Geelong, and its own transport fleet.

Reference

Norm Houghton, 2016. *The AKD Softwoods Story: 1954 to 2016*.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XRIXE6U8e57ilO9C9u6GJd9W8ial_FsW



BUSHFIRE IN THE 'BURBS

By Peter McHugh

This article is supplied by the author for publication in the AFHS newsletter. It is published (with additional photos and illustrations) on Victoria's Forests & Bushfire Heritage website at victoriasforestsandbushfireheritage.com/2024/01/14/bushfire-in-the-burbs.

As the summer bushfire season of 1943-44 opened, Australia had already endured four years of war with many men and women away overseas or deployed to northern Australia.

In Melbourne's bayside suburbs, as in all parts of Australia, austerity measures were in place with rationing of food, petrol, clothing, gas, electricity, firewood and other basic goods. There were also severe labour shortages which affected essential services like the railways, as well as community organisations such as the Red Cross and volunteer firefighters.

Melbourne was hot in January, and the driest since colonial records began. Less than three quarters of an inch of rain fell, less than a third of the long-term average, as drought conditions gripped much of southern Australia leaving many areas tinder dry and fire prone.

The early weeks of 1944 produced heat waves with temperatures exceeding 100° on the old Fahrenheit scale.

Bushfires just before Christmas on 22 December 1943 had already killed 10 firefighters near Wangaratta.

On Friday 14 January 1944, bushfires raged at Daylesford, Woodend, Gisborne and other central Victorian towns near Bendigo. To the west of Melbourne there were blazes out of control from Geelong to the South Australian border. Fires burned near towns such as Hamilton, Skipton, Dunkeld, Birregurra, Goroke and Geelong itself.

Friday was hot with a strong dry northerly wind, the maximum temperature rose to 103.2°F with a maximum wind gusting to 54 mph, the relative humidity fell to 6% and the moisture content in fuel plummeted to about 2%.

In the sleepy beachside suburbs of Beaumaris, Cheltenham, Black Rock and Mentone, about 12 miles south of Melbourne, the threat came swiftly as two overlapping bushfires broke out during late morning. The first began near the corner of Bay Road and Reserve Road and spread into the grounds of the Victorian Golf Club. It was followed by another nearby blaze soon after.

At the time, these neighbourhoods resembled small coastal villages with unmade roads, sandy tracks and modest weatherboard and fibro-cement houses scattered throughout the dense thickets of ti tree scrub with overhanging manna gums and an understory of acacias and tall bracken. There was also a string of more substantial brick homes with manicured gardens along Beach Road overlooking Port Phillip Bay.

The inferno headed south and burned properties along Beach Road towards the Beaumaris Hotel and eventually reached the foreshore near Table Rock.



In January 1944, a bushfire raged through the Melbourne seaside suburbs of Cheltenham and Beaumaris.



Beach Reserve, Beaumaris c. 1935. Source: State Library Victoria. <https://viewer.slv.vic.gov.au/?entity=IE20815126>

Fire brigade officers reported that the water pressure was so poor that their hoses were useless, the flow being little more than a trickle even when pumps were used.

The fire also cut telephone and electricity as the timber poles burned and fell blocking many streets.

The fire occurred before the formation of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and there was limited co-ordination and communications among volunteer firefighters.

Control was quickly handed over to the Melbourne Metropolitan Brigade's Chief Fire Officer, James Kemp, when the extent of the disaster became obvious.

Large numbers of volunteers, air raid wardens, army personnel from barracks at Caulfield, State Electricity Commission staff, police, residents and regular firemen fought the blaze.

Some residents evacuated to the relative safety of the beach. It's reported that some put what possessions they had managed to grab into small boats to keep them safe. But one boat loaded with suitcases broke loose and drifted out to sea, driven by the strong northerly wind and was eventually recovered the next day near Williamstown.

The fire eventually burned itself out late on Friday afternoon when it reached scrubland on the coast near Ricketts Point.

The overall fire area was comparatively small at about 1500 acres, and the part burnt by flames only totalled 700 acres. But the ferocity of the blaze placed some

118 houses in grave danger and 58 homes were destroyed, with eight others suffering serious damage. An additional 57 properties sustained damage to outside sheds, dunnies and fences.

Most of the losses were behind the iconic Beaumaris Hotel in the Tramway Parade area. Another eight homes were lost along Dalgetty Road, Cromer Road, Coreen Avenue, and Hardinge, Rennison and Stayner Streets. The caravan park on Beach Road was also burned with the loss of seven vans and five motor cars.

Thankfully no lives were lost, but 20 were killed in other parts of Victoria.

The Prime Minister, John Curtin, announced an immediate £200,000 Commonwealth grant for fire victims in NSW and Victoria, while the Victorian Premier, Sir Albert Dunstan, added a state grant of £50,000. Public appeals were also opened which were co-ordinated by bayside councils.

As is always the way, the aftermath of the Beaumaris fires produced a flurry of finger-pointing and attempts to shift blame.

Issues arose over road construction, power and water supplies as well as restrictions on clearing of native vegetation. The risks of charcoal gas producers on cars and uncontrolled burning off by residents also received notable mentions.

Because of wartime austerity measures and shortages of building materials, it took years for communities to rebuild. Many families simply moved away, and it wasn't until the 1950s and Melbourne's post-war housing boom that the suburbs rebounded.

There was also justifiable public outcry at the lack of government action after similar events five years earlier in 1939 and the landmark Royal Commission by Judge Stretton. One of his key recommendations had been to create a single fire service for country Victoria.

These fires, along with those at Wangaratta and Yallourn a month later on 14 February 1944, finally forced the state government to act. The Premier, Sir Albert Dunstan, and Minister for Forests, Sir Albert Lind, who had both delayed legislative changes in parliament, decided there was no alternative but to ask Judge Stretton to chair a second Royal Commission.

Stretton's report returned to his earlier themes and once again highlighted the lack of a cohesive firefighting ability outside the Melbourne area.

After nearly six months of debate and argy-bargy in state parliament, legislation to establish the CFA was finally given Royal Assent on 4 December 1944, and came into effect on 2 April 1945.

Additional information

Kingston Local History, 2024. The Beaumaris Bushfires of 1944. localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au/articles/319

DOG'S GRAVE

By Peter McHugh

This article is supplied by the author for publication in the AFHS newsletter. It is published (with additional photos and illustrations) on Victoria's Forests & Bushfire Heritage website at victoriasforestsandbushfireheritage.com/2024/02/04/dogs-grave.

When travelling around state forests, it's not uncommon to find a lonely and forgotten grave tucked away in the bush. The last resting place of some unlucky traveller or pioneer killed in an accident, unable perhaps to receive medical aid in time. They were usually buried where they died.

The grave of former dance girl and colourful pub owner, Kitty Kane, which is just north of Walhalla on the Aberfeldy Road, is probably one of the better known in Gippsland.

About 30 years ago, I was inspecting logging coupes and new road works at Dargo with Forests Commission overseer, Brian Madigan, and he took me to the remote and rather unusual Dog's Grave, about 45km southwest of Omeo on the Birregun Road.

Cobungra Station has a tradition dating back to March 1851 when George Gray of Wangaratta sent his two sons and four stockmen with a herd of some 600 beef cattle in search of pasture following the bushfires of Black Thursday, 13 February 1851.

The Gray family had grazing interests extending over the Great Dividing Range to the headwaters of the Wentworth River. They employed a drover, Peter Meehan (sometimes spelled Meighan), to look after their cattle on the south side.

In his lonely vigil, Peter got to know every creek and gully from Mount Birregun to Mount Baldhead while seldom meeting anyone. His only companions were Skinny, his horse, and Boney, his dog.

As with all good bush folklore, there are a couple of versions of the story, but the commonly accepted one goes that in 1863, Boney, most likely an Australian Kelpie, died after it ate a poisoned dingo bait.

At the time, Peter was said to be driving cattle from Cobungra Station towards Dargo. On occasion the stockmen took stock as far south as the Stratford or Maffra sale yards.

Normally, Mount Birregun was covered in snow during winter which made it necessary for the drive to start in the autumn. It usually took between seven and eight days for the whole trek, depending on the weather and number of cattle. It was a perilous journey along the steep and narrow bridle paths with the Dargo River below.

Boney died at the first camp site into the drive towards Dargo and Peter built a small grave of flat stones and erected a rough bush picket fence.

Peter drowned in the Dargo River under mysterious circumstances in about 1883 and is buried in the local cemetery.

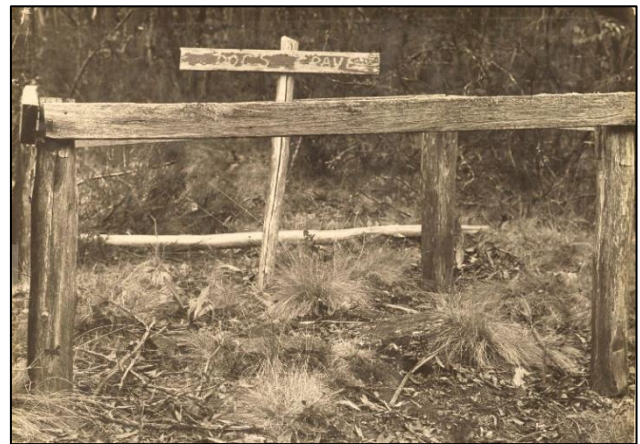
Years later in 1888, a camp cook with a government survey team examining a possible railway route from Briagolong via Dargo through to the goldfields of Omeo, noticed the dilapidated grave and rebuilt the fence, but bushfires inevitably destroyed it, and the site was lost again.

The stock route became redundant and was abandoned in about 1932 when the Alpine Road connecting Cobungra Station to Omeo was completed.

However, the general location of Dog's Grave remained marked on old Forests Commission inch-to-the-mile mapsheets.

In 1964, local Dargo identity and mountain cattleman, Jack Treasure, along with John Neilson, the Department of Mines Geologist, set out to find the exact location of the lost grave. They were acting on additional information from elderly Dargo resident David Phelan.

It took a while, but they eventually found a clearing near a creek and a pile of rocks that had once been the hearth and chimney of an old cattleman's hut. A bit more searching and Dog's Grave wasn't far away. The pair then erected a third wooden fence.



The fence erected by Jack Treasure and John Neilson in 1964.

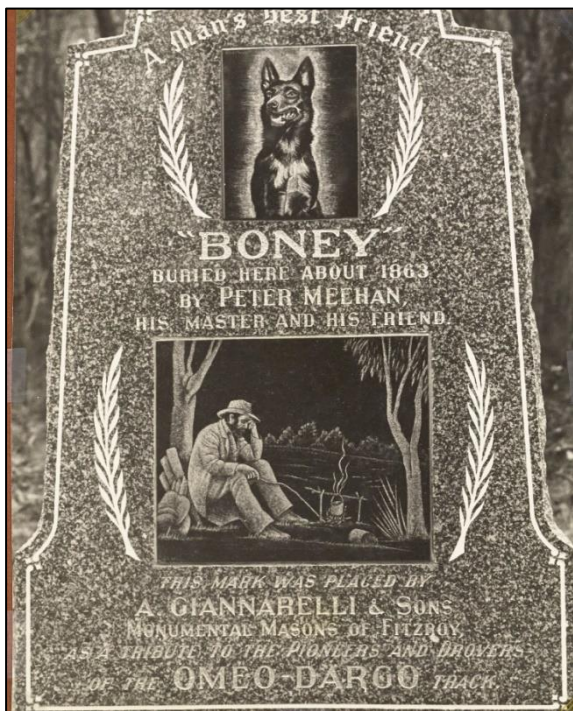
A decade later, in May 1975, two magnificent Harcourt granite headstones, made by Melbourne stonemason John Giannarelli, were unveiled beside Boney's original grave.

The main headstone has an image of Boney and, below it, another inspired by Frederick McCubbin's well-known painting "Down on his Luck". A smaller granite stone on the left has a brass plaque with bush poem written by Jack Treasure in 1964.

The monument is a tribute to all pioneering families of the high country, and, for the first time, to the Australian Kelpie.

The unveiling was performed jointly by the Avon Shire President, Mr Gordon Hughes, and Mr Louis Pendergast, President of the Omeo Shire. Dignitaries from the local historical societies, together with groups

of cattlemen and their families attended the ceremony. Bob Fulton from the Forests Commission at Swifts Creek provided approval and support to erect the memorial on state forest.



The Dog's Grave today.

The alternative story from Charles McNamara, a descendant of the family which owned Cobungra, is that the dog was called Angus and owned by drover Johnny Crisp.

The legend surrounding Dog's Grave will never be fully settled, no matter how many times it gets debated over a beer at the bar of the Dargo Hotel or the Golden Age at Omeo. Either way, it's worth a visit.

Additional information

Flora Jones in collaboration with OS Green, 1977. *The Dog's Grave: An Account of Droving Days in Early Gippsland*. Stratford and District Historical Society. ISBN 059642609. www.highcountryhistory.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/10198.pdf

THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE DUMMY SPIT ...

By Peter McHugh

This article is supplied by the author for publication in the AFHS newsletter. It is published (with additional photos and illustrations) on Victoria's Forests & Bushfire Heritage website at victoriasforestsandbushfireheritage.com/2024/01/07/heatberlie-quarry-grampians.

State forests and public land not only produce timber but are also important for sand, crushed rock and dimensioned stone for buildings.

Victoria has large quantities of hard basalt, or bluestone, across the western district plains but in the early days of the colony it had to suffer the indignity of importing sandstone from NSW.

In about 1861, Francis Watkins, a stone mason from Stawell, was hunting at Mount Difficult in the Grampians when he spotted some high quality and durable rock.

The white sandstone had excellent grain, texture and colour. More importantly, it was weather resistant and easy to work, but hardened when exposed to the elements.

Watkins took a lease on 3 acres of Crown land at what later became known as Heatherlie Quarry and by the 1870s was supplying stone to Stawell for the courthouse, Anglican and Catholic churches, the Town Hall and memorial tombstones.

Between 1872 and 1876, Watkins submitted samples of the stone for consideration for the governor's proposed new residence, Melbourne's Law Courts as well as for Parliament House, but was rejected each time because it was deemed either poor quality or too expensive.

Stone for parliament house was instead chosen from Bacchus Marsh, but it decayed rapidly, and large parts had to be replaced with stone from Tasmania. Such was the outrage over the design and construction of the project that in 1876 a Royal Commission was held into the matter.



Mr John Woods MP
 Source: State Library
 Victoria
handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/256577

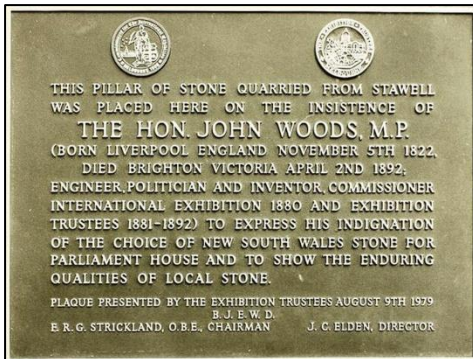
Watkins enlisted the support of his local member of parliament, Mr John Woods MP, who advocated that stone quarried from his electorate would be most suitable for the parliament building.

If you look carefully, just near the corner of the Royal Exhibition Buildings in Carlton, there is a lonely



column of sandstone which has defiantly stood there since 1881. The odd looking obelisk with the slightly wonky lean looks a little out of place against the magnificent world heritage building.

It has always intrigued me, and at first glance it resonates as a century-old dummy spit. The plaque which was put there in 1979 says:



But, by 1882, the fortunes of the Heatherlie Quarry had reversed and a government-funded narrow gauge tramway connected the quarry to Stawell and the main railway to Melbourne. Contracts were signed to use the stone for the next stage of parliament house and, by February, the first rail trucks reached Stawell on their way to Melbourne.



Works on Parliament House June 1888.
<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/256638>

But things came to an abrupt halt when there were concerns about the quality of some of the initial samples. The matter was subsequently investigated by an expert committee, a board of enquiry, and a parliamentary select committee, who all visited the quarry site.

Finally in 1885, a tender to build the classical colonnaded front of parliament house, which looks down Bourke Street, using Mount Difficult stone was accepted.



Between 1886 and 1887, the Heatherlie Quarry was working at peak production employing over 100 men. Optimism was high and a new township was gazetted which even included a school.

The quarry also supplied stone for the Melbourne Town Hall, the State Library of Victoria, the General Post Office (GPO), the Regent Theatre and the Port Authority Building among others.

But Melbourne's economic boom following the 1850s gold rush turned to bust in 1890, and the demand for building stone plummeted. However, the quarry re-opened in 1899 with more orders for significant Melbourne buildings.

The quarry declined and was eventually closed in 1938 seeing much of the machinery sold. The tramway (which is now a rail trail) was closed to traffic in 1949.

Limited quantities of stone were used until about 1981 for the repair of existing buildings, as well as facing the wall in Melbourne's troubled City Square and extensions to an ANZ Bank.

The Grampians National Park was proclaimed in 1984.

In the 1990s, Premier Jeff Kennett suggested completing parliament house's unfinished "grand design" which included a large central dome as well as north and south wings. But these new works would have required re-opening the Heatherlie Quarry, and it was deemed politically too difficult in a national park so the idea was shelved.



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heatherlie.dulkeith.net.au/downloads/HeatherlieQuarry.pdf

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THE BERMAGUI FLOODS OF FEBRUARY 1971

Text and photographs by Terry Beath

The floods of February 1971 were shockers. The rain started in earnest on Thursday 4 February, continued for the next three days and, as I recall, was only easing off on the Sunday. We had around 30 inches of rain (1058mm) at Bermagui within 24 hours. All telephones were out. Our Forestry Commission two-way radio system was the only communication along the entire NSW far south coast that weekend, and we had to relay messages from Eden to Bermagui, then on to Batemans Bay, to Nowra then on to head office in Sydney

We had a long-standing weather station at the then Forestry Office in Bermagui South, and religiously recorded rainfall, temperatures, humidity etc. What happened after the split into Narooma and Bega sub-districts in mid-1973 I do not know. Sadly, all these records seem to have disappeared, as has much of the memory of the February flood, the then highest ever recorded in the Bega Valley!

Mumbulla Shire, as it was then, in the Bega Valley lost 49 bridges. The flood was so strong that it dragged debris from the catchments and tried to wash the lot out to sea. The one concrete bridge across the Bega River was at the north end of the beach at Tathra. Many tons of logs and other debris were washed down: they built up and eventually the pressure lifted the bridge and washed the whole lot out to sea, never to be seen again. It took about 10 years to replace it. This meant coastal traffic had to use the gravel Dr George Road to get to the forests, then on to Tanja Road, or go the long way around via the Princes Highway to Cobargo then cut across Bermagui.



Our forest roads weren't immune to the damage caused by the massive downpour. We sustained significant damage, especially on the granite soils of Mumbulla State Forest. Table drains were washed out, sometimes to over a metre in depth. The following photograph I took on Mumbulla Trig Road soon after the rain event. One side issue the deluge illustrated was that we were not compacting our road formations enough after construction by the relatively recent use of Cat D8 bulldozers, where in the past we used D6s, and these tended to pack down the fill better. Compaction was required now, and we introduced that for future construction.



The rain didn't only damage our roads in Mumbulla State Forest, but also gave Mumbulla Creek a real going over as the next photographs show:



Nerrigundah area after the floods

When the rains came, we also had our roading gang and their two D8s constructing the new Gulph Creek Road up north of Narooma, near Nerrigundah. The road construction gang thought that once the rain got heavy, they would move the machinery to higher ground and go home as work could not proceed, it being so wet. They didn't go high enough, and both dozers were under water for about a day, so required a lot of cleaning up and oil and fuel replacement the week after the deluge. Fortunately, both machines spluttered into action with no ongoing problems. The crew's caravan and fuel supplies were not so lucky. The caravan headed towards the coast and was a write-off, never to be seen again.

The Nerrigundah area, west of Bodalla, really copped a hammering, and farmlands were well under water for a couple of days. I had to go up there to assess our damage and took the following photos along the way up and back.



The almost ready-to-harvest corn crop on the left of Nerrigundah Road (above) has a bit of a silt problem! The telegraph line down the road succumbed to the forces of nature, probably after over 50 years of carrying the phone calls from the Nerrigundah township, including the local hardwood sawmill and the phone booth in the street. I used it one day about a month before the floods.

BODALLA FOREST PARK

Text and photographs by Terry Beath

In 1970, as a service to the travelling public on the Princes Highway, my boss, forester Dave Ryan (Bermagui South sub-district) had allocated some of his scarce budget from our works program to make a forest park with toilets and BBQs off the Princes Highway in the Bodalla Forest, north of Narooma. Construction got underway and a pleasant little park in a spotted gum forest, designed by Dave Ryan, was to be ready in February 1971. The park is situated 9km north of Narooma or 32km south of Moruya.

The park was scheduled to be opened by Jack G. Beale (Member for South Coast (1942-1973), NSW Minister for Conservation (May 1965-Mar 1971 and NSW Minister for Environmental Control, Mar 1971-Dec 1973) – the first environment minister in Australia). "Old Jack" was a new experience for all of us. Anything going on in his electorate that might have a

positive message (for him) would be sent to the media, with photos of Jack supplied. I recall he was an engineer, and fond of making dams. The biggest, and fastest growing file in our Bermagui South office was the one marked "Ministerial, Urgent!!"

I recall that the rain began late in the week we were due to have the Bodalla Forest Park officially opened on the Friday. By that morning, we radioed out to district head office in Batemans Bay and Dave Ryan (who was living in Narooma) that "we have a problem Houston"! We sent a Narooma local, Bobby Carr, up to the park area and he radioed in that by 9am there were about four metres of water over the entry road off the Princes Highway. We called through to Sydney to ring our marvellous minister's office and told them the situation. Half an hour later we were instructed that the opening would be at the Narooma RSL Club, about 10km south of the park. The minister would make a grand entrance by helicopter. Slight problem, so many other roads (and the highway) were cut that few people could get there, including the media (most important!) and those of us who lived in Bermagui and surrounds. Eventually his staff saw sense and the plaque had to wait for another day and a similar grand occasion!



Bodalla Forest Park before and after completion.

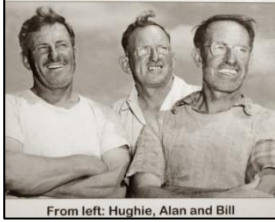


The Hon. Jack G. Beale.

BLUE GUM FOR A BLUE WATER FISHERY

From Ross Haldane, additional information from PROV, VPRS 11563/P0, unit 237, file 44/1092, compiled by Peter Evans

HALDANE BROTHERS



From left: Hughie, Alan and Bill

In 1944 three young Port Fairy fishermen, Hugh, Allan and William Haldane, began to build an 84ft tuna clipper from plans provided by the Western Boat Building Company in Tacoma, USA. (Port Fairy is a pioneer settlement on Victoria's

south-western coast, and has been a fishing port for most of its existence.)

The foundation for every wooden boat is the keel, for which some extremely long and durable timbers were required. The brothers approached the forester for the nearest area which might supply some suitable logs. That forester was John William Nugent, chief forester based at Forrest in the Otway Ranges. The Haldane brothers sought a red ironbark log (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*) from which a keel timber 68ft x 12in could be cut, plus some auxiliary timbers. Nugent advised that no red ironbark tree of that size could be cut from his district, but that a blue gum log (*E. globulus*) of such size might be available.

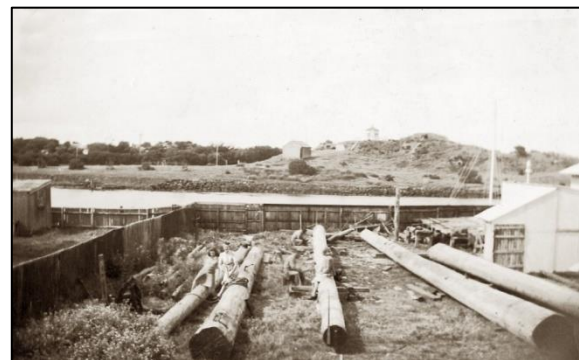
The brothers accepted the change, and John Nugent suggested that the timber be sought near Benwerrin, and that E. Babbington could be employed to cut the logs. As the sizes were too large for the local sawmill to process, the logs would be rough-dressed in the bush and hauled to a suitable place to be loaded onto motor trucks. Arthur Armistead of Lorne would then transport the dressed logs to the Deans Marsh railway station for loading onto railway trucks, from where they could be transported to Port Fairy. In addition to the 68ft timber, one 64ft x 14in x 16in, and two 44ft x 16in x 16in, and two 44ft x 12in x 10in timbers were required. After the costs of transport had been paid by the Haldane brothers, royalty totalling £29 3s 0d was to be paid to the Forests Commission Victoria.

When the logs arrived at Port Fairy, the brothers set about squaring them with adze and crosscut saw. The timbers were manoeuvred using a series of lifting frames, pulley blocks and hand winches. A long steaming tube softened the timbers for bending to the curve of the hull. The noise of sawing and hammering, and the smell of creosote, red lead and burning wood (providing steam for bending) filled the air on the banks of the Moyne River.

In mid-1951, the 120 ton, 84ft long *Tacoma* emerged from a rusting shed. It then took two months to hand-dig 130 tons of soil to lower the vessel ready for launching. Tallow from the local butcher was used to grease the slip. With a rising tide at 3:30am on 5 November 1951, Mrs Rebecca Haldane broke a ribbon-wrapped bottle filled with Port Lincoln (SA) seawater on the vessel, and *Tacoma* slid quietly into the Moyne River. It had been seven years since the blue gum logs had arrived at Port Fairy to start the project.



The tree from which the Tecoma logs were cut.



The blue gum logs landed at the boatyard in Port Fairy, Moyne River in the background. Courtesy Ross Haldane.



Squaring the logs. Courtesy Ross Haldane.



Tacoma on her slip at Port Fairy prior to launching into the Moyne River. Courtesy Ross Haldane.

In January 1952 the *Tacoma* sailed for her new home port of Port Lincoln. On board were the three brothers, their wives, seven children, local twins Jack and Keith Bellamy, two cats and a dog, plus assorted family furniture. For over 50 years, the *Tacoma* fished from Port Lincoln, first as a pioneer of the tuna fishery, and later as a prawn trawler, before being donated to the people of Australia by the Haldane family. As this edition of the Australian Forest History Society's newsletter goes to press, the *Tacoma* is on a commemorative visit to her birthplace of Port Fairy. More info at the Tacoma Preservation Society www.tacoma.org.au



Tacoma. Courtesy Ross Haldane.

PETER EVANS HONoured AT VICTORIAN COMMUNITY HISTORY AWARDS

By Frank Stamford

Congratulations are due to Light Railway Research Society of Australia (LRRSA) and AFHS member Peter Evans for being awarded a Certificate of Commendation in the 2023 Victorian Community History Awards for his book *Wooden Rails & Green Gold*, published by the LRRSA last year (see review, AFHS newsletter no. 87). His book was shortlisted for the History Publications Award. These awards were announced on 2 February 2024 in a ceremony at the Victorian Arts Centre. The Victorian Community History Awards are sponsored by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Public Record Office Victoria, and are held annually to recognise excellence in historical method. It is the premier historical award event in Victoria. The book is available from:

<https://shop.lrrsa.org.au/product/wooden-rails-green-gold>. More info on the 2023 awards is at <https://prov.vic.gov.au/community/grants-and-awards/community-history-awards>.



ROBERT ONFRAY'S BLOGS

Robert Onfray continues his accounts on three different topics each month – stories about Surrey Hills (Tasmania), travelling around Australia, and on 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 and includes details of how to subscribe to his email list.

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

Surrey Hills

- December:** [The silver town that was auctioned off the face of the earth](#)
- January:** [Extending the railway to the west coast](#)
- February:** [Reclothing fertile acres – a history of Parrawe](#)
- March:** [Happy 100th birthday, Wee Georgie Wood!](#)
- April:** [Special ANZAC stories](#)

Forestry/Land Management

- December:** [More fauna stories – leeches and ticks](#)
- January:** [The 1939 fires – a blame game](#)
- February:** [A fable about land management in the tropics](#)
- March:** [Fudging the figures](#)
- March:** [The humble clothes peg](#)
- April:** [Will the dominos fall across the country after Victoria and Western Australia ended the harvesting of native forests?](#)

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.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, ADELAIDE, 1-4 JULY 2024



Flinders University in Adelaide will be hosting the annual conference of the Australian Historical Association from 1-4 July 2024. The local organising committee of historians from the university's College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences is excited to welcome historians from around Australia and the world to share their new research and to engage one another on the pressing questions facing our discipline and our communities.

The conference will include a "Green Stream" hosted by the Australian and New Zealand Environmental History Network (ANZEHN) – see

www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/engage/events/aha-conference/green-stream-cfp-aha-2024.pdf.

For details on the conference, see the AHA website theaha.org.au/aha-conference-2024 and the conference website www.flinders.edu.au/engage/culture/whats-on/aha-conference.

For information on the ANZEHN, see www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org.

PROFESSOR MARK ELVIN (1938-2023)

John Dargavel has passed on news of the death in Oxford UK of Professor Mark Elvin on 6 December 2023. He was Emeritus Professor of Chinese History at the Australian National University and Emeritus Fellow of St Antony's College at the University of Oxford. While not a forest historian per se, he was a member of the AFHS for a few years, and also contributed a paper to our fifth conference, held in Tasmania in February 2002. His paper, "Chinese poems on forests and trees", is contained in the conference proceedings www.foresthistory.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/AustraliasEverChangingForestsV.pdf (pp3-14).

Both the Australian Centre on China in the World at the ANU and St Antony's College at Oxford have published obituaries – <https://ciw.anu.edu.au/content-centre/article/news/remembering-mark-elvin> and www.sant.ox.ac.uk/news/mark-elvin-1938-2023.



DENIS READ, FORESTER

From Peter McHugh

Victorian forester Denis Read died on 13 March 2024 after a long period of diminishing health. His postings with the Forests Commission Victoria included: 1965-1968 Cann River Assessment; 1976-1980 Orbost; 1980-1984 DFO Cann River; Portland; Regional manager, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (Victoria). In accordance with his wishes there was no funeral, with his ashes scattered in the bush.



Graduating Class at the Victorian School of Forestry, Creswick, December 1962.

Back (l to r): John Booth, Andrew Thornley, Denis Read, Frank Lawless, Stan Rowley.

Front (l to r): Neil McCracken, Graeme Morrison, Oliver Raymond, Ross Squire, William (Bill) Incoll, George Wright.

RALPH AFFLECK, SAWMILLER (1929-2023)



In February 2024, the ABC's *Landline* program reported that sawmiller Ralph Affleck had died in December, aged 93. *Landline* had previously featured him in October 2014 when reporter Pip Courtney visited his sawmill Legume, near Killarney on the Queensland-New South Wales border which he had built

himself from scavenged parts. The original story attracted over 1 million views.

www.abc.net.au/news/rural/programs/landline/2024-02-25/vale-ralph-affleck/103510092

www.abc.net.au/news/rural/programs/landline/2014-10-18/vintage-mill/5825036

FRIENDS OF THE ANBG – THURSDAY TALKS

The Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra present talks on Thursdays at 12:30PM; they are held in the theatre at the visitors centre. Many of the talks have a tree or forest theme and many of these have a historical focus. The full calendar is at www.friendsanbg.org.au/calendar_talks. The abstracts of some recent talks are summarised below.

29 Feb: Professor Sue O'Connor – "Art in the Bark: The Indigenous carved boab trees of northwest Australia."

The Australian boab (*Adansonia gregorii*) is an iconic tree which is related to the baobabs of Africa and Madagascar. Found only in a restricted area of northwest Australia, boab trees are instantly recognisable by their massive bottle-shaped trunks. Boabs are an important economic species for Indigenous Australians with the pith, seeds and young roots all eaten, and the bast of the roots used to make string. Less well known is that many of these trees are culturally significant and some were carved with images and symbols. This paper will look at the history of research on carved boab trees in northwest Australia and the results of recent fieldwork in pursuit of these rare trees. www.friendsanbg.org.au/node/1964

18 Apr: Professor Dave Rowell – "A whirlwind tour of Brachychiton: Kurrajongs, Flame Trees, Queensland Bottle Trees and their relatives".

There are about 40 species of Brachychiton found on the Australian mainland, and two species found in Papua New Guinea. This genus includes the kurrajongs as well as other iconic species trees such as the Queensland bottle tree, the Queensland lacebark and the Illawarra flame tree. Brachychiton species freely hybridise in nature, and many natural hybrids have also been documented. Brachychiton appears to have evolved in northern Australia, spreading across the country when the climate was more benign than it is today. Species of this genus have evolved a number of characteristics that allow them to survive across Australia's variable, and often harsh environments, including the ability to store water, being facultatively and dry season deciduous, and having photosynthetic branches and trunks. In this talk Dave Rowell will describe the origins and diversity of Brachychiton group and focus on some of the particularly interesting and iconic species.

www.friendsanbg.org.au/node/1971

ANU SEMINAR, 2 MAY 2024: THE WORLD OF MAB GRIMWADE

On Thursday 2 May 2024, Thea Gardiner, a PhD student from the University of Melbourne, will present a seminar on "The World of Mab Grimwade: Australian Women, Biography and Archives". For forest historians, she is perhaps better known as the wife of Sir Russell Grimwade.

Date & time: Thurs 2 May 2024, 11am–12.30pm

Location: Seminar room 6.71, RSSS Building

Online:

history.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/ncb/events/world-mab-grimwade-australian-women-biography-and-archives

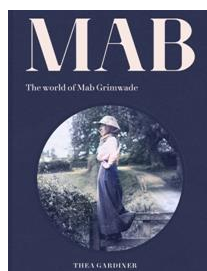


Mab and Scottish Terriers at Westerfield, December 1931, Papers of Wilfrid Russell and Mabel Grimwade, University of Melbourne Archives, photograph by Russell Grimwade, 2002.0003.00889.

Searching for the imprint of a woman's life is a challenge repeatedly expressed by the biographers of women, and Mab Grimwade is no exception. Born into a genteel family of pastoralists and investors in colonial Victoria, Mabel Louise Kelly (1887-1973), or "Mab" to those who knew her, would grow up to make an enormous contribution to Victoria and Australia. Most evidently, it was made through bequests to the University of Melbourne and through the donation to the university of a large, diverse and highly valuable collection of books and artworks. Mab Kelly married Russell Grimwade – chemist, botanist, industrialist and philanthropist – in 1909, and much of her life from that point was publicly defined by her husband's narrative. While Russell Grimwade left a large private collection including autobiographical papers, letters, and miscellanea that could be accessed by his biographer, Mab preserved very little in the way of personal papers. How do we recover the lives of women who left little documentation? How do we piece together their stories and cultural impact? Using Mab Grimwade as a case study, this seminar addresses some of the methodological problems faced by historians writing biographies of women.

Thea Gardiner researches and writes on the place of women in Australian historical memory. In October 2023, she published a biography of an influential Victorian philanthropist titled *The World of Mab Grimwade* with Melbourne University Publishing –

www.mup.com.au/books/the-world-of-mab-grimwade-hardback.



BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



Kate Legge, 2022. *Kindred: A Cradle Mountain Love Story*. Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton VIC. 256pp., ISBN: 9780522878929 \$34.99 . URL www.mup.com.au/books/kindred-paperback-softback.

From the publisher's notes.

A love cradled by nature's greatest architecture: a national park.

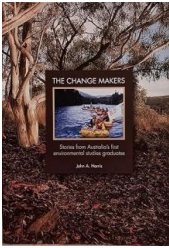
He was an Austrian immigrant; she came from Tasmania. He grew up beside the Carinthian Alps; she climbed mountains when few women dared. Their honeymoon glimpse of Cradle Mountain lit an urge that filled their waking hours. Others might have kept this splendour to themselves, but Gustav Weindorfer and Kate Cowle sensed the significance of a place they sought to share with the world. When they stood on the peak in the heat of January 1910, they imagined a national park for all. *Kindred: A Cradle Mountain Love Story* traces the achievements of these unconventional adventurers and their fight to preserve the wilderness where they pioneered eco-tourism. Neither lived to see their vision fully realised: the World Heritage listed landscape is now visited by 250,000 people each year. Award-winning journalist Kate Legge tells the remarkable story behind the creation of the Cradle Mountain sanctuary through the characters at its heart.



Jessica Urwin, 2023. "Reflecting on our *Anthropocene Days: An interview with John Dargavel*". In *Global Environment*, Vol.16 (3), October 2023. White Horse Press, Winwick, Cambridgeshire, UK. ISSN: 1973-3739 (print), 2053-7352 (online). URL www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/10.3197/ge.2023.160306.

From the opening paragraph.

John Dargavel, the subject of this interview, has led a full and influential career as a forester and an environmental historian. Engaging in an interdisciplinary career across the span of the Anthropocene to date, John offers unique insight into living with and in this new epoch, recently offering up his wisdom on the matter in *Anthropocene Days*. Published by The White Horse Press, *Anthropocene Days* is the latest in an impressive list of works that provide insight into the histories of Australia's forests and forestry across the twentieth century. John's is a career defined simultaneously by local environments and global influences.



John A. Harris, 2009. *The Change Makers: Stories from Australia's first environmental studies graduates*. Big Island Graphics. 260pp. ISBN: 9781740883092. URL catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/4726603.

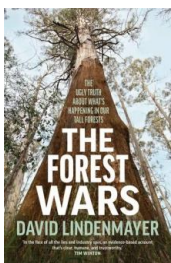
From the publisher's notes.

What makes for a good environmental citizen? Is she or he born or made?

Each new generation not only lives a different life from their predecessors, but sees dramatic changes as they live their own lives. What gives one person a sense of purpose and direction as they live through the changes, while others simply get lost? At a time when there is a desperate need to ensure that the global environment remains fit for people to live in, what makes some young people respond to that call, while others do not even hear it?

"The environment is a relatively new field of endeavour and experience for educators, students and practitioners, and bears examination from all three perspectives. This book offers insights into the educational, professional and life experiences of some of the pioneers of the modern era of environmental management. The stories and observations are at once nostalgic, moving and motivational." – Steve Dovers, Director, Fenner School of Environment & Society, ANU, and CCAE Class of 1980.

Note: While published in 2009, this book escaped our attention until now. Thanks to Phil Edwards from Charles Sturt University for bringing it to our attention during a chat among the thousand year old pencil pine forest grove at Dixons Kingdom camp in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park in Tasmania. As indicated by the sub-title, the book contains stories from graduates of Australia's first environmental studies course, a course "based on the biological and ecological sciences relating to contemporary environmental issues facing human society". The course began in 1970 at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now the University of Canberra), with the first eight graduates each receiving a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in 1973. The book tells the stories of 46 students who graduated between 1973 and 1997.



David Lindenmayer, 2024. *The Forest Wars*. Allen & Unwin. 288pp. ISBN: 9781761470752. \$34.99. URL

www.allenandunwin.com/browse/book/David-Lindenmayer-Forest-Wars-9781761470752.

From the publisher's notes.

Lifts the lid on destruction of native forests by government corporations

and logging industry that is making bushfires worse, killing wildlife and costing taxpayers millions, for the sake of woodchips for export.

Since colonisation, Australians have been frantically logging our native forests as if our lives depended on it. Our lives do depend on the forests—but on keeping them, not destroying them.

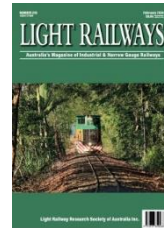
World-leading forest expert Professor David Lindenmayer exposes the unsettling truth about what is happening in our tall eucalypt forests. Despite what we

are told, logging makes bushfires worse for decades after the chainsaws stop, and kills iconic animals and birds each year in droves, driving many species closer to extinction. The trees that are logged mostly end up as paper and cardboard. And it's not profitable: taxpayers are funding it.

Lindenmayer reveals an unholy alliance between state forestry, the timber industry and unions. Loggers routinely breach regulations, and industry intimidates anyone who questions what they are doing. Worse still, even where native forest logging is supposedly ending, efforts are being made to continue it under a different name.

Forests purify our drinking water. Forests are our best hope to reduce carbon emissions. Forests preserve biodiversity. It's time we realised the value of leaving our native forests standing.

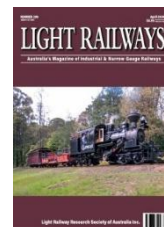
Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways, February 2024 (LR295) and April 2024 (LR296). Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN: 0727 8101. www.facebook.com/people/Lrrsa-Light-Railway-Research-Society-of-Australia-Inc/100064543968038



LR295 carries a review of *Whistles through the Tall Timber* by Nick Anchen, which deals primarily with the Warburton and Noojee railways in Victoria, both of which had forest produce as a principal source of traffic. There is also extensive information on the timber tramways and sawmills which

fed both railways. The text is supported by oral histories from railwaymen, timber workers and local residents, and the book is lavishly illustrated. Images are presented in large format and the standard of reproduction is excellent. Available direct from the author (Sierra Publishing) at: www.sierraaustralia.com/whistles-through-the-tall-timber.html

There is also a field report from Trevor Staats which describes the tramways and mining plant at Greens Creek in north-eastern Victoria. While not directly forest-related, there is a very nice image of the historic wood-fired boilers.



LR296 carries on its front cover an excellent image from Frank Stamford of former Forests Commission Victoria Climax locomotive 1694. Nick Anchen offers an extensive dissection of a fatal accident on the Powelltown timber tramway in 1913, and Jim Longworth concludes his three-part series on the sawmills and timber tramways on the south coast of

NSW.

There is also a report on the Erica-Walhalla tour of 25 and 26 November 2023, which included a visit to the eastern branch of the Erica Steel Tramway of the Forests Commission Victoria.

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