Australian Forest History Society

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

Leon McIntosh Ellis, Director of the New Zealand Forest Service, 1921 to 1928

L.M. Ellis in February 1920, photographer unknown.
From the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
The photo was provided to the library by Ellis's daughter, Barbara Ellis Colby.
Ref: 1/2-190387-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
natlib.govt.nz/records/22851054.

See Michael Roche's article, "Offsetting a Timber Famine: Visions for a 300,000 Acre State Exotic Plantation Estate in New Zealand", pp 3-6.

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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 2025.

Input is always welcome.

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

Contributions may be edited.

IN THIS ISSUE

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue doesn't quite cover the planet, but its scope does range from New Zealand to France to Western Australia. Michael Roche gets us underway with the second part of his article on Leon MacIntosh Ellis the Canadian-born inaugural New Zealand Director of Forests in the 1920s. The first part was in the April 2025 edition.

Steve Thomas from the Friends of ACT Trees (FACTT) has kindly allowed the newsletter to reprint his article on Comte de Buffon, published originally in the March 2025 edition of the FACTT newsletter. As Steve notes, despite de Buffon's significant contribution to science, he is far less well known than his 18th century contemporary Carl Linnaeus.

My own article on the Bibbulmun Track in Western Australia arises from Juliana Lazzari and me having completed the walk over a couple of months earlier this year, from May to July. The article isn't about our walk as such, but is inspired by things we read, things we saw, and things we researched. Hopefully it doesn't come across as being self-indulgent. I have a few more Bibbulmun-related articles in mind for future issues of the newsletter.

My thanks also to Juliana for her usual (and usually unacknowledged) help with finalising the newsletter for publication. It's one of those background jobs that often goes unappreciated, but which would be noticeable if it wasn't done. Any undetected typos,however, remain my responsibility.

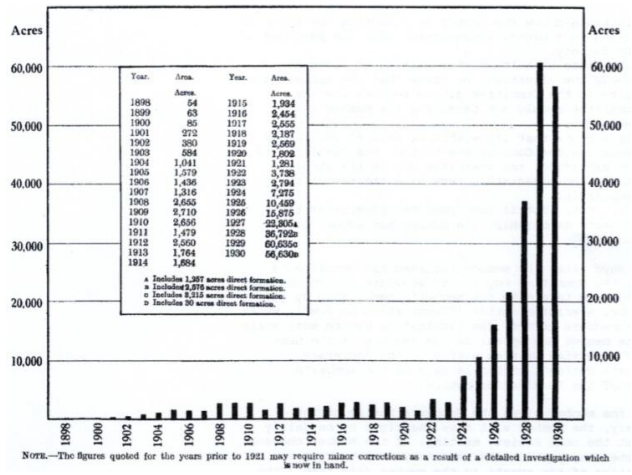
Our annual general meeting is approaching. A date hasn't been set, but November seems to be our go-to-month. All AFHS members are invited to consider putting their hands up for a committee position – it's been a while since we've had a full committee. And, as always, a reminder that contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. Forest history is a very broad remit, so there's plenty of scope to get something published.

OFFSETTING A TIMBER FAMINE: VISIONS FOR A 300,000 ACRE STATE EXOTIC PLANTATION ESTATE IN NEW ZEALAND

By Michael Roche

This is a continuation of the article "Timber Famine and the First New Zealand Forest Planting Boom of 1925" published in the April 2025 newsletter, pp3-6.

In 1925, L.M. Ellis the inaugural New Zealand Director of Forests, a Toronto forestry graduate with previous experience in Canadian Pacific Railways, the Canadian Forestry Corps in WWI, and the Forestry Commission in Scotland, in submitting his annual report to the Commissioner (i.e. Minister) of State Forests, prefaced it with the "First Quinquennial Review of the Operation of the National Forest Policy" in which he summarised the achievements of the previous five years since the service had been established and laid out a "Programme of Action for the Period 1925-1935". This action plan was predicated on a coming timber famine with Ellis observing that kauri "is practically all gone" that white pine (kahikatea) would last "not more than twenty years", that supplies of rimu, now the main softwood, would last about 40 years. Firewood at 35.7% was the largest consumption category followed by sawn timber 33.2% and fencing and farm uses at 19.8%. In comparison, consumption of hardwoods were relatively insignificant, and exotic plantation timbers were available in only limited quantities.



Source: *AJHR*, 1930, C3.

In passing, Ellis also noted that per capita consumption of sawn timber in New Zealand amounted to 240 board feet compared to 153 in Australia, though the latter imported 42% of its needs compared to 19.5% for New Zealand. Considering projected population growth and future requirements, Ellis predicted that national consumption of sawn timber would reach 675,000,000 board feet by 1965 with other products increasing in proportion. When intersected with the results of the National Forest Inventory completed in 1923, the situation was concerning; "Our virgin softwood resources will be economically exhausted by the period 1965-70" (*AJHR*, 1925, C3, p7). But Ellis was not daunted, he was confident that the proper application of "forest-culture" could meet this challenge – "The State plantations will require to be of such dimensions as to take over the major burden of supplying the raw material at that time" (*AJHR*, 1925, C3, p7). This represented something of a change in emphasis for most of his efforts from 1920 to 1925 had been geared towards implementing indigenous forest management systems. In 1922, for instance, he had ruminated "Whether the key to silviculture will be found by the regeneration of the indigenous forests, in propagation of exotic pines, or by compromise remains yet to be determined" (*AJHR*, 1922, C3, p11). The National Forest Inventory available in 1923 forced a major rethink. He observed that there were now 63,000 acres of state plantations and it was "recommended that this acreage be increased to 300,000, formation to be completed by the year 1935" (*AJHR*, 1925, C3, p7) which he calculated by 1965 would contribute crucially to production from all sources of an annual crop of 700,000,000 board feet (Table 1). Local body and private plantations were also anticipated to be significant suppliers.

Table 1 Predicted Sources of Supply by 1965

Source of Supply	Annual Yield of Timber	% of Total
State plantations	450 million board feet	64
Indigenous forests	50 million board feet	7
Local body, proprietary & private plantations	150 million board feet	21
Imports	50 million board feet	7

Source: *AJHR*, 1925, C3, p7.

This was not, however, to be a complete reversal of effort for he predicted that "total outturn from the managed forests will, however, gradually increase from that date (1935) onwards to 1,000 million" board feet per annum (*AJHR*, 1925, C3, p7), that is in the longer run indigenous forests under scientific management would again become the major source of supplies. More immediately, he considered that one professional objection to large-scale plantation forestry had been overcome by reducing plantation costs to around £2 per acre so that the entire programme would run to no more than £1,250,000.

Behind the confident announcement of this large-scale afforestation programme, there were some deeper concerns. Initial scientific investigations pointed to slow growth rates and a lack of regeneration in the indigenous forests. Furthermore, the National Forest Inventory, although much superior to the estimates of Land Department officials in earlier decades, was far from accurate.

In 1926, Ellis could report that the plan was "in principle approved" and he was now describing it as a "minimum programme". He pointed to the 11,120 acres planted in 1925 being eclipsed by 15,964 acres in the following year. The intention was to create a series of regional plantations across the country, though not evenly for 55,012 acres were acquired at Kaingaroa in the central North Island. In 1927, 19,924 acres were established. The Forest Service also announced that it would henceforth concentrate on a small number of species (Table 2) which it believed would be of "the highest

economic value, and the crops therefrom will offer the widest diversification of use and permit of the application of modern silvicultural standards" (*AJHR*, 1927, C3, p3). Three points to note are the range of species whereas the afforestation companies tended to concentrate on using *Pinus radiata*. Second the service preferred the name Insignis Pine for many years before switching to *Pinus radiata,* and third that the large-scale planting of this species took place gradually.

Table 2 Exotic Plantation Species favoured by State Forest Service in 1927

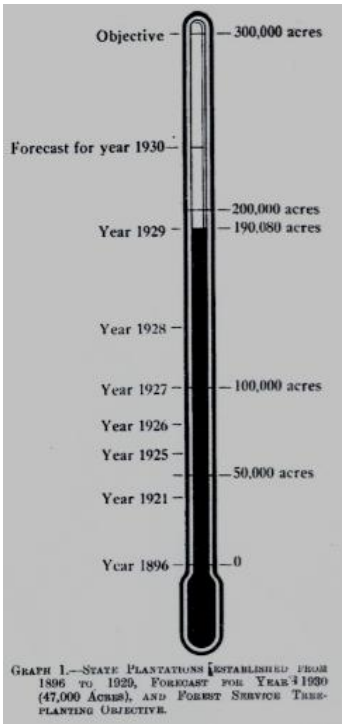
Main Species	Lesser Species
Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)	Lodgepole pine (*Pinus murrayana*)
Corsican pine (*Pinus laricio*)	Canary Island pine (*Pinus canariensis*)
Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga douglasii*)	Long-leaf pine (*Pinus palustris*)
Macrocarpa (*Cupressus macrocarpa*)	eucalypts
Lawson cypress (*Cupressus lawsoniana*)	others
Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*)	
Insignis pine (*Pinus radiata*)	

Source: AJHR, 1927, C3, p3.

Given that state forestry was still viewed with suspicion by some in the agricultural sector, Ellis felt the need to stress that "areas planted during the year comprised poor land of little value for farming purposes hence the State-forestation operations have put to profitable use another 20,000 acres of the waste lands of the Dominion" (*AJHR*, 1927, C3, p18). Returning to his aspirational figure of 5,000,000 acres of "idle and deteriorated lands" which would take two centuries to replant and be prohibitively expensive, he believed that this might be innovatively achieved within 25 years by what he termed "direct plantation formation" (*AJHR*, 1927, C3, p4) (somewhat ironic in view of present-day problems with wilding pines). This approach was short-lived, being deemed unsatisfactory by 1929. Reflecting the new importance of afforestation, the annual report in 1927 also included a section on planting activity by conservancy.

As it transpired, Ellis did not see his decade long programme to completion resigning early in 1928 to take up a more remunerative position in Australia. This task was to be left to his successors Edward Phillips Turner and Alexander ("A.D.") McGavock (Roche, 2004; 2023). The 1928 annual report signed off by surveyor-botanist Phillips Turner recorded a further increase to 35,106 acres planted. The creation of local supply forests remained central to the programme. The 1928-1929 planting target was revised upwards to 54,000 acres (*AJHR*, 1928, C3, p6). Phillips Turner found it necessary to justify these efforts.

> "The afforesting of third-class and deteriorated lands which have been found useless for settlement is a forward step, as by this means the waste lands of the Dominion, which at present constitute breeding-places for noxious weeds and vermin, can be changed from State liability to valuable revenue-producing asset" (*AJHR*, 1928, C3, p2).



GRAPH 1.—STATE PLANTATIONS [ESTABLISHED FROM 1896 TO 1929, FORECAST FOR YEAR 1930 (47,000 ACRES), AND FOREST SERVICE TREE-PLANTING OBJECTIVE.

3. AFFORESTATION OPERATIONS IN GENERAL.

A total area of 57,406 acres was planted during the year, which makes a grand total of 190,000 acres established to date and leaves 110,000 acres of the 1925 objective of 300,000 acres to be completed by 1935. The accompanying graph shows at a glance the progress in State afforestation.

This substantial advance over the programme has occurred by reason of the fact that afforestation has again been utilized by the Government to assist in reducing unemployment during the winter months, and has involved large nursery programmes and extensive plantation operations, which are illustrated by appendices hereto.

The progress made to date and the areas established in each conservation region are analysed in Table 4. An approximate five-year programme is also included, which is based upon the assumption that a gradual improvement in the labour conditions of the Dominion will be experienced.

Source: *AJHR*, 1929, C3.

The 1928-29 target was exceeded with 57,400 acres being planted. While this was celebrated as a British Empire wide record, it was regarded as likely to be exceptional, "due to the necessity for providing employment for those out of work during the winter months, by way of an increased and accelerated planting programme" (*AJHR*, 1929, C3, p2). In 1929, this "involved the engagement of approximately 1,300 labourers at the peak period" (*AJHR*, 1929, C3, p2). Herein lies the origins of an enduring myth that the afforestation programme and Kaingaroa more specifically was created solely to provide unemployment relief work. Kaingaroa nevertheless began to expand markedly from this point in part because of the availability of flattish grass and scrub covered "bush sick" Crown Land that was unsuitable for pastoral farming because of a still undiagnosed cobalt deficiency. Disaggregated planting targets for each of the main regional plantations were also set for the first time. These allocated some two-thirds of the annual planting to Kaingaroa.

The Third Empire Forestry Conference of 1928 was hosted by Australia and New Zealand (in October). It produced two specific recommendations related to afforestation. First, that a plan for post-1935 planting was required extending up until they reached "commercial maturity" to produce even age classes and enable the forests to be worked on "a sustained yield basis" and second that the plantations be thinned at least every decade (these they anticipated could be a source of wood pulp) (*AJHR*, 1929, C3, p6).

The State Forest Service annual report now also alluded to other political decisions impacting on the expansion of plantations. Future afforestation, Phillips Turner acknowledged, would be constrained by the:

> "Government's pronouncement that the question of forestry is to be regarded as fundamentally a land-use problem, calling for full co-ordination between the Departments of Lands, Agriculture, and Forestry. In future, therefore, all unplanted afforestation areas will be re-examined in conjunction with the officers of those Departments, particularly with respect to soil-analysis and general suitability for settlement purposes" (*AJHR*, 1929, C3, p6).

Government geologist and soil scientist Dr Les Grange from 1926 to 1930 was engaged in carefully mapping the "bush sick" country and able to show a correlation between the distribution of the Taupo ash shower and the worst affected lands (Prebble, 1998). Building on this work, agricultural chemist Bernard Ashton demonstrated that "bush sickness" was not a contagious disease but more likely a mineral deficiency. Aston incorrectly believed it was an iron deficiency, but it was not until 1935 that Australians John Filmer and EJ Underwood correctly identified cobalt as the missing element (Bailey, 1996).

To avoid being stymied by the powerful agricultural and pastoral lobby, Phillips Turner offered a concession to the effect that:

> "If the intensity of pasture-management in the Dominion increases to such degree during the next half-century as to ensure the profitable settlement of some of this now marginal and ultra-marginal land, arrangements to this end can be made after one forest rotation, and the land thus released will have been appreciably improved by the tree crop, and by forest roads, tracks, and drains and it will have been revenue-producing in the interim" (*AJHR*, 1929, C3, p6).

The 1929 annual report was also notable for devoting a section to company afforestation. Since its inception in 1923, two years ahead of large-scale State Forest Service efforts, some 213,200 acres had been planted, overwhelmingly concentrated in the central North Island (*AJHR*, 1929, C3, p27). Owen Jones, a former head of the Forests Commission Victoria, had played a significant role in this activity after moving to New Zealand Perpetual Forests as Forestry Superintendent in 1925 (Jones, 1928). By 1929, the Forest Service had planted a slightly lesser area of 190,080 acres. By this time, there was some unease about company promotional claims about growth rates and future financial returns 25 years hence. The official position was clearly stated, the government did not grant any special concessions to any company, nor did it offer any safeguards for private investors (many of whom were based in Australia).

In 1930 as the Great Depression intensified, the 47,000 acres planting target was exceeded by 9,000 acres providing work for 1,800 men for five months. New Zealand now possessed the largest area of state-owned plantations in the Empire. At 145,963 acres, Kaingaroa now comprised 58% of the total state plantation area. Following the advice of the Empire Forestry Conference, some thinning work was carried out in the older plantations. It was acknowledged that this would reduce the fire hazard and the threat of insect and fungal attack as well as producing a better final harvest, but this initiative was driven by providing work relief as much as achieving silvicultural ends.

By 1931, Phillips Turner had retired and was replaced by A.D. McGavock a very experienced former Lands Department officer who had been the original Conservator of Forests for Westland (1921-1930) and somewhat anomalously was sceptical of the value of having professionally qualified foresters in the service. McGavock faced difficult times (Roche, 2023). The area planted in 1932 fell to 41,009 acres "in accordance with Government policy to taper off the afforestation operations" (*AJHR*, 1931, C3, p4) and he anticipated it would fall further in future years. Even so, he noted that the government had still called on the Forest Service to provide four to five months work for 2000 men. What was not mentioned in the annual report was that in 1931-1932 the government planned to merge the Forest Service back into the much larger Lands Department. This plan was ultimately abandoned but the price that McGavock paid was a £160,000 reduction in departmental funding to £230,000. By 1933, he could report that with the Depression easing and with it the need to take on relief workers, annual planting was under 16,000 acres (back to 1926 levels). By this time, Ellis' 300,000 acres target had been exceeded – some 363,700 acres of plantations having been established, with the 1934 projected target still being 35,000 acres, 86% of which would be in the North Island (*AJHR*, 1933, C3, p2). McGavock could also report on wood sales from the older state plantations, including 32 foot 9 inch diameter *Eucalyptus risdoni* for power poles and 28-year-old *Pinus laricio* and *Pinus murrayana* for cord-wood (*AJHR*, 1933, C3, p8). The following year McGavock reported that 30,500 acres had been planted "As part of the general plan to provide as much labour as possible during the off season" (*AJHR*, 1934, C3, p2). This was a different rationale from that put forward by Ellis and carried out by his successors in previous years. Also in 1934, McGavock observed that exotic plantation forestry now tended to be popularly regarded as the entirety of forestry practice. This led him to restate forest policy in his 1934 report. In McGavock's assessment, "The

national forest policy has a two-fold purpose – the maintenance of climatic, soil, and water equilibria, and the supply of timber and other forest-produce" (*AJHR*, 1934, C3, p2). The former, because of its significance to the agricultural and pastoral sector, was of the greater national importance, while exotic plantation forestry was only part of the solution to future timber needs with McGavock giving more weight to indigenous forest management exemplified by his statement:

> "That the part which these exotic forests will ultimately play in the forest economy of the Dominion, one hundred to one hundred and fifty years hence is difficult to predict. Experience in foreign countries where forestry has been practised over periods of several centuries indicates, however, that exotic species have definite limitations, and for this reason the national policy must envisage the management of the indigenous forests to secure their maximum possible production of timber" (*AJHR*, 1934, C3, p3).

A year later – at the end of Ellis' decade long planting programme – McGavock struck a less than sanguine note. Forest policy now amounted to being "the art of maintaining all non-agricultural soils in a state of maximum plant productivity, forestry may be credited during the period under review with substantial contributions to the attainment of the Government's long-term policy of land-utilization" (*AJHR*, 1935, C3, p2). With exotic plantations in excess of 406,000 acres, the politicians were poised to end large-scale afforestation. Furthermore, McGavock now rejected any notion of a future timber famine. In his view the "country already possesses sufficient planted areas to supplement the indigenous forests and to ensure an adequate supply of timber, &c., for the next century. The extension of the exotic forests for the export of timber and other products cannot be justified on economic grounds" (*AJHR*, 1935, C3, p3).

McGavock signalled the beginning of a new era in 1936. He acknowledged the establishment of 385,536 acres of exotic plantation forests between 1919 and 1936 but included this among 10 other forestry accomplishments and put forward a new five-year plan for 1936 to 1940. This included consolidation and blanking in the plantations and some experimental underplanting of exotics in indigenous cut over forests (*AJHR*, 1936, C3, p2). The main effort however was to go into fire control and developing working plans for the main beech and rimu forests in both main islands, as well as moving from block to log sales across the country. McGavock was steering the service back to its origins, but his retirement in 1939, WWII, and forest engineer Alexander Entrican becoming Director of Forests, planning for utilisation of the plantations would lead the service in a different direction in the 1950s.

Ellis' vision for a 300,000 acres exotic plantation estate was bold – even visionary – but ultimately driven by his belief that New Zealand faced a timber famine by 1965. It was left to his successors to see the plan with modifications through to completion. This was not without complications. Phillips Turner had to respond to push back from the agricultural and pastoral sector over the alleged expansion of plantations onto land suited for settlement. McGavock took over a Forest Service starved of funding. Both had to provide winter unemployment relief work which was not necessarily in alignment with where the plantations were best located. Serendipity also played a part in that the cure for "bush sickness" was not found until after the main planting effort was over, for this would have jeopardised Forest Service access to easily planted Crown Land in the central North Island. Likewise, the availability of *Pinus radiata* seed also played a part in the increasing use of this species in company and state plantations. Utilisation of the plantation estate in the 1950s for pulp and paper manufacture was also a departure from Ellis' initial vision. Finally, Ellis' confidence in ultimately finding the solution to regeneration of indigenous forests and thus enabling a pivot from plantations back to natural forest management proved misplaced. For all that, the creation of a 400,000 acres exotic plantation estate was a notable accomplishment for a small fledgling government department with few professionally trained staff.

Conversions

1 acre equals 0.404ha
1 board foot equals 0.0023m^3
1 foot equals 30.5cm
1 inch equals 2.5cm

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GEORGES-LOUIS LECLERC, COMTE DE BUFFON

By Steve Thomas

This article was first published by the Friends of ACT Trees in its March 2025 newsletter sites.google.com/site/factacanberra/news (issue no. 72). It is reprinted with permission.

The portrait of Buffon was painted by François-Hubert Drouais in 1753 and is taken from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges-Louis_Leclerc,_Comte_de_Buffon. The original is held by the Musée Buffon in Montbard, France.

There can be no-one who reads this newsletter who has not heard of Carl Linnaeus but I suspect far fewer will have heard of Georges-Louis Leclerc.

Both were born in 1707. Georges-Louis Leclerc was born on 7 September and died in 1788. Linnaeus on 23 May and died in 1778. Their lives could not be different yet entwined in the search for a greater understanding of the natural world. Now, looking back, we know what has occurred in the last two hundred years or so, but in the time these men were alive it was a very different story in Europe. For most people the world as they knew it was seen through a very narrow window and explained by the Bible without question.

Today we are all familiar with the system we use to bring order to the world proposed by Linnaeus and the work on genes and clades which is disrupting taxonomists; but in the 1700s there was considerable debate about how we should make sense of the natural world.

Georges-Louis Leclerc was born into a wealthy family. In 1717 his mother inherited a large sum of money which meant that his father Benjamin-Francois became lord of Buffon and Montbard. This allowed the family to move to Dijon where they became influential in society. Georges went to the Jesuit College in Dijon. His father wanted him to go into Law but he was more interested in mathematics. He studied mathematics in Angers along with medicine and botany. However in 1730 he was involved in a duel and fled to Nantes. Meeting up with the Duke of Kingston and his tutor he travelled with them and generally enjoyed himself. When his mother died he inherited the fortune and took the name De Buffon and left his somewhat disreputable companions. Later the King made his lands in Burgundy into a county making him a count.

Now a rich man he entered the highest ranks of society in politics and science. In 1734 he was elected to the Royal Academy of Science for his work on Probability.

Apart from mathematics he was interested in timber properties and forestry. At the time the sustainability of the forest and the production of timber for ships in particular was vital for seafaring nations.

In 1752 he married the woman he had been courting for two years, Marie-Francoise de Saint-Berlin-Malain. She came from a noble family which had descended into poverty. Unaccepted in society she preferred to live in Montbard away from high society. They had one son who met his end at the guillotine during the revolution.

Moving in the highest circles it was not long before he was appointed keeper of the royal botanic gardens known then as the Jardin du Roy and his work took a turn towards the natural world.

Recognising that his appointment was not widely accepted particularly by the savants at the gardens, he used his influence to have them better recognised. When Linnaeus visited the Jardin, Boffon was not there as he regularly spent time at his estate. As he wrestled with the need to bring order to the plants, animals and rocks in the gardens and the Cabinet du Roy he obtained a copy of *Systema Naturae*. He soon rejected its methodology telling a friend "Linnaeus' methods of all the least sensible and the most monstrous". A view he held for the rest of his life.

In September 1749 the first three volumes of Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle, Generale et Particuliere, avec la Description du Cabinet du Roy* were published and quickly sold out and would eventually outsell Voltaire and Rousseau. Over the years it became a tome of 36 volumes during his life and a further 8 after his death. It came to encompass Geology, Botany and Zoology. He contradicted the church's teachings about the age of the earth, the fixity of species, the number of species and the nature of fossils. To avoid criticism he stated his views and then contradicted them by saying that of course this view is incorrect because of what the church teaches.

The University of Paris known as the Sorbonne challenged his work and he realised that he had to refute his own views which he grovelling did but never retracted any of them in subsequent editions.

Among the many differences between Linnaeus and Buffon the question whether there are sub species of humans stands out. Linnaeus declared that there are four races with white Europeans being at the top of the tree. Buffon took an entirely different view. He thought it an error of the greatest magnitude.

Linnaeus stated that there are 40,000 species in the world. Buffon was coming to the view that there was a great deal more as well as a great number of extinct species. He reasoned that all species could be traced back to a common ancestor. Immediately after writing this he stated that this view must be wrong because all species were fully formed by the Creator. He went on to say that "Nature's great workman is Time".

Material was building up in the Jardin du Roy. One example that illustrated Buffon's personality (at least with someone he admired) is that of Philbert Commerson and his assistant Jean Baret who sailed with Bougainville. When the ship got to Tahiti in 1768 Baret was exposed as a woman which was illegal at the time. Commerson and Baret left the ship in Mauritius and lived there for the rest of Commerson's life. Baret returned to France and instead of confiscating the collection she brought

back, Buffon had it purchased. With the money Jeanne Baret lived comfortably until her death in 1807.[1]

Buffon was very much against slavery and thought that civilisation probably originated in Asia. He also disagreed with the near universal (and remaining) view that the world's resources are unlimited. All a bit out there for the times to say the least. In *The Epochs of Nature* in 1774 Buffon stated that human driven environment change had got to the point where another and last epoch should be designated. The power of humans to change their environment and not always for the best dictated that this should be accepted as another epoch. Now in 2025 many think this a reality.

He was of course not correct about everything or indeed most things as we now know.

His ideas about the Americas were way off the mark. He thought that animals and people were smaller there than in Europe due to degeneracy. An idea that Jefferson when he was the American Minister to France attempted to disprove with a stuffed moose, which by the time it reached Paris was really stuffed. He continued to send bones to disprove Buffon. Earlier when Franklin was the American Minister to France he attended a dinner party along with Abbé Raynal who held the same views as Buffon. Franklin noticing that all the French were on one side of the table and the Americans on the other said "Let us all rise and see on which side nature has degenerated". The Americans were far better built and Abbé Raynal particularly "like a shrimp" (Wulf 2016 p160).

In 1782 Carl von Linne Linnaeus's son visited the Jardin and was shown great respect by Buffon who was embarrassed when they passed by the near nude muscular almost 3m tall statue of himself commissioned by the king in 1776. It is now in the Museum of Natural History in Paris in a stairwell niche. There are several busts and statues of this famous French biologist which fortunately were not destroyed during the revolution.

In 1865 Darwin wrote a theory of evolution which he called pangenesis which he gave to Thomas Henry Huxley. Huxley replied saying "Did he not know he was almost plagiarising Buffon's theory of moule intérieur?" Huxley was familiar with Buffon's work because while sailing with the navy he had a copy and no doubt read it many times. Taken somewhat aback, Darwin obtained a copy of the work and wrote to Huxley "I have read Buffon – whole pages are laughably like mine". In the fourth edition of the *On the Origin of Species* he goes some way to acknowledging Buffon as the first to write on this topic a hundred years earlier.

Given the scientific advances over the last two centuries the work of Buffon has come full circle as gene technology is upsetting to some extent the taxonomy of today. Buffon should be seen as an influencer of great effect, said Ernst Walter Mayr (1904-2005). He also said that: "Except for Aristotle and Darwin, no other student of organisms (whole animals and plants) has had as far-reaching an influence."

"Buffon asked most all of the questions that science has since been striving to answer", the historian Otis Edward Fellows (1909-1993) wrote in 1970. As well he wrote:

> "His glory lies in what he prepared for his successors: bold and seminal views on the common characters of life's origin, laws of geographical distribution, a geological record of the earth's evolution, extinction of old species, the successive appearance of new species, the unity of the human race."

Perhaps his greatest contribution was that many who read his work and reflected on it went on to change our understanding of the natural world of plants, animals and insects indeed all life forms extant and extinct. He like few others set the stage for the likes of Darwin and many others. The language barrier and his necessary style of constantly refuting his own opinion has meant that he is not as well known in the English speaking world as he should be. In the history of ideas and the principle of science over beliefs he was a giant.

Gould (2000) summed up Buffon:-

> "No other person could possibly have provided better fuel for such a transformation the history of human thought: this man of such restless energy; this man who operated forges and who developed the experimental and mathematical skill to infer the age the earth from balls of iron; who composed thirty six volumes the greatest treaties ever written in natural history by working fourteen hours a day for more than forty years. And if all these skills and attributes could not turn the tide, Buffon also wrote in elegant prose that placed him, a "mere" student of nature, among the leading men of letters in his interesting time. Buffon surely knew how to prevail – for style, after all, is the man himself."

The Jardin du Roy was saved from the revolution which started in 1789 by some clever footwork by the savants which resulted in it now being the Jardin des Plantes and still in place.

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Gould S.J., 2000. *The Living Stones of Marrakech: Penultimate Reflections in Natural History*, Harmony Books, New York.

Roberts J., 2024. *Every Living Thing: The Great and Deadly Race to Know All Life*, Riverrun, London.

Wulf A., 2016. *Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science,* Murray London.

[1] The life of Jeanne Bart is described a little differently in Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeanne_Baret.

The Bibbulmun Track, South-West Western Australia

By Fintán Ó Laighin

The Bibbulmun Track is a 1000km walking track in the south-west of Western Australia, stretching from Kalamunda in the Perth Hills to Albany on the south coast, linking eleven towns – the other nine being Dwellingup, Collie, Balingup, Donnelly River Village, Pemberton, Northcliffe, Walpole, Peaceful Bay and Denmark – many of which have a rich timber industry history. The track passes through the Southwest Botanical Province, one of the world's 34 terrestrial hotspots for conservation priority,[1] through jarrah, marri, karri, tingle, wandoo and coastal forests, traversing state forests, national parks and farmland. It goes through or near a number of arboreta, along old logging railway formations built by companies such as the Millars Brothers Timber Company, past the Gloucester Tree, the Tree Top Walk in the Valley of the Giants, and through the Lane-Poole Reserve, named after Charles Lane-Poole who was Western Australia's Conservator of Forests from 1916 to 1921; he authored a report for the Australian Government in 1922 on Papua New Guinea's forest resources, was a forestry adviser to the Australian Government from 1925 to 1927 and, from 1927 to 1944, was concurrently the Inspector-General of Forests and Acting Principal of the Australian Forestry School.[2]

The name "Bibbulmun" recognises the Bibbulmun people of the south-west, "a sub-group of the Noongar (also spelt Nyungar or Nyoongar) people, whose country extended for many hundreds of square miles, comprising the triangle of land from what is now Jurien Bay to Esperance".[3]

It was Kirup forester Len Talbot who proposed the name.[4,5] He worked for the Forests Department and subsequently the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) until his retirement in 1991. Among other things, he wrote a number of articles for departmental publications, some of which have a historical theme.[6] He also has a species of spider orchid named in his honour. [7,8]

The Bibbulmun Track trail marker was adopted as part of a "significant overhaul" of the track in 1987-88, overseen by project officer Drew Griffiths.[9] It is a stylised representation of the Waugal (Rainbow Serpent) which, in Aboriginal spirituality, is a snakelike Dreaming creature responsible for the creation of the Swan and Canning rivers and other waterways and landforms around Perth and the south-west of Western Australia.[10,11] Its use was suggested by Noongar elder Nundjan Djiridjarkan, Ken Colbung.[12,13] It's not clear who designed the Waugal symbol, but copyright is owned by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).[14]

The history of the track goes back to July 1972 when Geoff Schafer, a founding member of the Perth Bushwalking Club in 1969, "walked into the office of the Minister for Forests, H.D. Evans, with an innovative idea designed to encourage people from Western Australia's urban areas to go bush. The Minister liked the idea and sent Geoff to the State's Forests Department with a green light to go ahead."[15]

However, even with the support of the minister, establishing the track wasn't quite so straightforward. Geoff's idea "raised concerns in the Forests Department, which at the time had a small recreation budget and little or no knowledge of long distance trails. Fortunately, several officers seized on Geoff's idea and set about overcoming the considerable challenges it posed. Foremost among these were Peter Hewett and

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[1] Bibbulmun Track Foundation, n.d. "Flora & Fauna". www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/the-track/flora-fauna

[2] L.T. Carron, "Charles Edward Lane-Poole (1885-1970)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lanepoole-charles-edward-7026, published first in hardcopy 1983.

[3] Bibbulmun Track Foundation, n.d. "History". www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/the-track/history

[4] Officers from the Recreation and Landscape Branch, 1986. "Facelift for the Bibbulum Track". *CALM News*, Vol. 2 No. 11, January 1986, Department of Conservation and Land Management, p2. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080038/080038-02.11.pdf

[5] The photo of Len Talbot is extracted from a larger photo, taken by Grahame Rowland, and published in *CALM News*, June-July 1992, p4 library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080038/080038-1992.06.pdf. The article that accompanies the photo, "Tall tales and true on tape" by Lottie Lent, is about Len's involvement in an oral history project conducted by Julia Ball.

[6] For example, "Wooden Gold: Early Days of the Sandalwood Industry", *Forest Focus*, Forests Department of Western Australia, 1983 (reprinted in *Landscope*, library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080043/080043-30.003.pdf).

[7] *Caladenia pendens* subsp. *talbotii* Hopper & A.P.Br. Talbot's Spider Orchid florabase.dbca.wa.gov.au/browse/profile/18031.

[8] Stephen D. Hopper and A.P. Brown, "Contributions to Western Australian orchidology: 2. New taxa and circumscriptions in Caladenia (Spider, Fairy and Dragon Orchids of Western Australia)", *Nuytsia: Bulletin of the Western Australian Herbarium*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2, 2001), p264. The species listing states that it was named after Len Talbot "in appreciation of the considerable assistance he has provided us in searching for and locating rare forest plants. Len accompanied SDH on several trips to locations of the orchid named after him." archive.org/details/nuytsia14westa/page/264

[9] Jim Baker, 2023. "Evolution of the Bibbulmun Track". *Landscope*, Vol. 38 No. 4, Winter 2023. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080052/080052-38.034.pdf. See also the article of the same title in *Bibbulmun News*, issue 93, pp18-21. s40370.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Bibbulmun_News_issue_93.pdf

[10] "Wagyl". Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wagyl.

[11] For more information on Noongar spirituality, including the Waugal, see the "Kaartdijin Noongar – Noongar Knowledge" website published by the South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council. www.noongarculture.org.au/spirituality

[12] Bibbulmun Track Foundation, 2022. "Submission: Draft Forest Management Plan 2024-2033". Attached to a letter of 16 December from Kath Broderick, Chair, Bibbulmun Track Foundation, to Professor Chris Doepel PSM, Chairman, Conservation Commission of Western Australia. www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FMP-submission-2022.pdf

[13] "Ken Colbung". Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Colbung

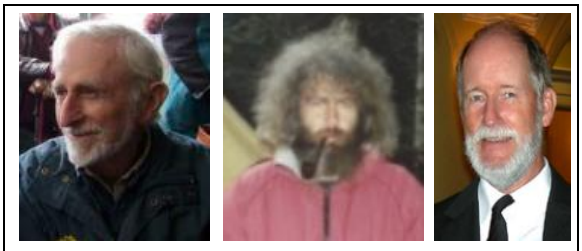
[14] 2018 Memorandum of Understanding between Bibbulmun Track Foundation Inc. and Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions – Parks and Wildlife Service, June 2018, p6. www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MOU_BTF_DBCA_2018_signed.pdf

[15] Jesse Brampton, 1997. "Building a Better Bibbulmun Track", *Landscope*, Vol. 18 No. 3, Autumn 1997. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/FullTextFiles/LS0114.pdf

Ross Gobby,[16,17] who played significant roles in transforming the idea into reality, a process that took almost two years. By September 1972 the enthusiastic planning team had designed a Lancelin-to-Albany walk, via the Leeuwin-Naturaliste ridge. This design proved unrealistic and was abandoned in favour of a shorter Kalamunda to Northcliffe proposal."[18]

Above: Director of Forests Peter Hewett and Collie assistant district forest officer Drew Griffiths proudly show their Bibbulmun plaques presented in recognition of their contributions to the Bibbulumn Track over 10 years from 1979 to 1989. The plaques were presented as part of the Bibbulmun Walk '89.

Source: CALM News, October 1989, p8. The photographer is not credited. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080038/080038-1989.10.pdf



Geoff Schafer *Jesse Brampton* *Wayne Schmidt*

Sources:

Geoff Schafer and Jesse Brampton – taken from Bibbulmun Track Foundation, n.d. "History", www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/the-track/history.

Wayne Schmidt, Environment and Conservation News*, 12/10 2010. Department of Environment and Conservation. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080658/080658-2010.12.pdf (p1). A short article on Wayne was also published in issue 3/10 2010 "Former DEC staffer recognised with Australia Day honour" (p4) library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080658/080658-2010.03.pdf.*

The first ground alignment of the track was in March 1974,[19] but the route was constantly amended over the following few years as various parties sought to protect their interests.[20] Walkers used the track during the 1970s, despite it not being officially opened until October 1979 as part of Western Australia's 150th anniversary celebrations.

The original route went from Kalamunda to Northcliffe; it was extended to Walpole in 1988 and to Albany in 1998, the latter as part of the "Building a Better Bibbulmun Track" project that was commenced in October 1993 by CALM. This project also radically overhauled the route, seeking to minimise conflicts with other land uses, such as forestry, mining, water catchments and roads. Only about 10 per cent of the original track was retained by the time of what was badged as its re-opening in 1998.[21,22]

The impetus for the redesign of the track came from Jesse Brampton (who was later appointed manager of the "Building a Better Bibbulmun Track" project) who had walked the Appalachian Trail in the USA in 1987 and the Bibbulmun Track a few years later. He "was shocked by the comparison. The Bibbulmun Track at that time followed mostly gravel roads rather than paths through the bush, there was inadequate signage, no shelters along the way, few toilet facilities and no guaranteed supply of water – little to attract the inexperienced or family hiker. The Appalachian Trail by comparison had wooden shelters along its full length, adequate water supplies and volunteers maintaining the trail – and it offered walkers deep immersion in beautiful natural landscapes along most of its length."[23]

[16] Along with Peter Hewett and Ross Gobby, Wayne Schmidt is credited by the Bibbulmun Track Foundation as one of the officers who seized on the idea – www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/the-track/history. He is also included in the heritage listing advice prepared by the National Trust of Western Australia and published on the Heritage Council's online portal "inHerit" – inherit.dplh.wa.gov.au/public/inventory/printsinglerecord/661a266b-516e-4635-9e89-d3aab8fac523.

[17] A brief paragraph on Ross Gobby is included at sites.rootsweb.com/~gregheberle/AdobePDF/Forestry-Personnel-PDFs/Gobby,%20Ross.pdf, a page which is linked from the "Forest Field Officers, Forestry Reunions, West Australia" page at sites.rootsweb.com/~gregheberle/FOREST%20FIELD%20OFFICERS,%20FORESTRY%20RE-UNIONS,%20WEST%20AUSTRALIA.html. See also "Brief History of the Jarrah Forest Lodge / Forestry Cadet Training Centre, Dwellingup Forestry Cadet Training Centre 1955-2019" jarrahforestlodge.com.au/history.

[18] Jesse Brampton, 1997. "Building a Better Bibbulmun Track", *Landscope*, Vol. 18 No. 3, Autumn 1997. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/FullTextFiles/LS0114.pdf

[19] This is the date used by Jesse Brampton in his 1997 article, and by the Bibbulman Track Foundation on its "History" page (both cited above), but an article in the January 1986 issue of *CALM News* states that "Most of the early planning was done by the former (sic, it should be "then") head of the Information Branch, Peter Hewett. Peter coordinated the efforts of many State Forest districts to have a marked track in the field by March 1973" – see "Facelift for the Bibbulum Track" (also cited above).

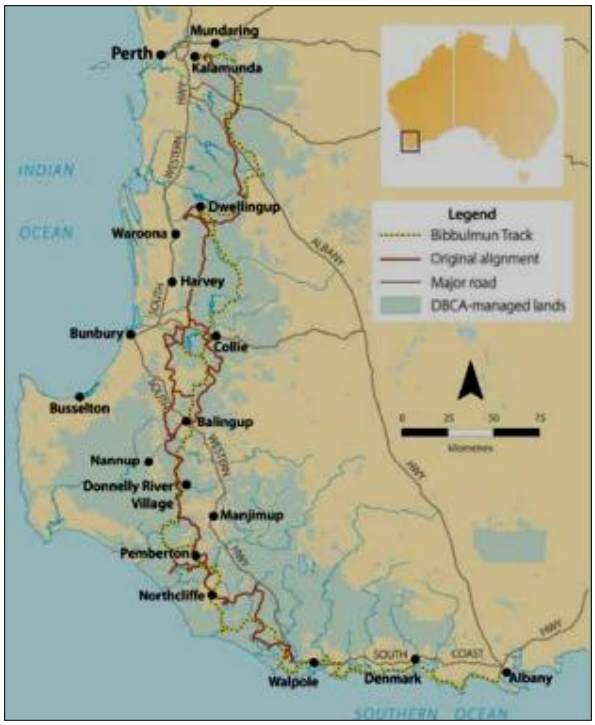
[20] The track is a bit like a river and continues to change its route, sometimes permanently (referred to as "realignments") or temporarily (called "diversions"). The realignments occur for a variety of reasons, such as making the route more scenic, moving it off 4WD roads, avoiding mine sites, away from areas of ecological or Aboriginal significance or from dieback-affected land, while diversions occur for such reasons as logging operations, flooding or bushfires, damaged infrastructure (e.g. burnt out or washed out footbridges) or track erosion. In the early 2010s, the expansion of a wind farm along the south coast resulted in the closure of the Hidden Valley campsite, and the construction of two new ones, Sandpatch and Mutton Bird. On the matter of moving it away from roads, an article in the January 1986 issue of *CALM News* refers to a walker who called it the "Bitumen Track" – see "Facelift for the Bibbulmun Track" (cited above).

[21] Jesse Brampton, 1997. "Building a Better Bibbulmun Track", *Landscope*, Vol. 18 No. 3, Autumn 1997. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/FullTextFiles/LS0114.pdf

[22] "Official opening of the Bibbulmun Track", *CALM News*, September-October 1998, Department of Conservation and Land Management, pp1-2. library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/Journals/080038/080038-1998.09.pdf

[23] Bibbulmun Track Foundation, n.d. "History". www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/the-track/history

Map showing the original 1979 track, the track as it was in 1988, and the proposed extension to Albany.
Source: Jesse Brampton, 1997.
"Building a Better Bibbulmun Track."
library.dbca.wa.gov.au/static/FullTextFiles/LS0114.pdf



Map showing the original 1979 track, and as it was in 2023.
Source: "Evolution of the Bibbulmun Track".
Bibbulmun News, *no 93,Aug-Nov 2023, p18.*
s40370.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Bibbulmun_News_issue_93.pdf

The Bibbulmun Track Shelters and Campsites

The shelters at the new campsites were often erected with corporate sponsorship or the assistance of local groups. Today, there are 49 campsites along the track spaced from about 7.5 to 27km apart; 48 of them have three-sided shelters in two basic designs, while one – Mount Wells, at the base of the Mount Wells firetower – makes use of the former towermen's hut. Each campsite also has a varying number of tent sites.

A number of the campsites and/or shelters have a forestry or forest management connection:[24]

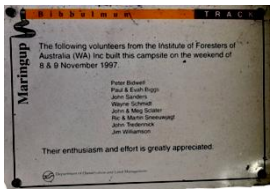
1. Hewitt's Hill: Recognises Forests Department superintendant Peter Hewitt, a key player in the development of the original track.
5. Beraking: After the pine plantation and old forestry settlement a little further south down the valley.
14. Mount Wells: The hut was used by the towermen on the adjacent fire tower. The original hut was destroyed by fire in 1961, and rebuilt by the Forests Department in 1962.
15. Chadoora: After the former rail siding and forestry settlement.
22. Yabberup: After the surrounding forest block.
23. Noggerup: After the settlement which was established following a 1907 request from Sexton & Drysdale's Mill for a railway terminus to be established.
24. Grimwade: After the former forestry settlement of Grimwade.[25,26]
25. Blackwood: Named after the Blackwood River, but located adjacent to the Blackwood plantation.
28. Boarding House: After the accommodation provided for the timber industry workers in the 1930s and 1940s. *(The campsite is at the end of a railway formation, presumably used by workers to travel to and from work each day.)*
29. Beavis: After the surrounding forest block, itself named after Jack Beavis, an early surveyor in the district.

[24] The number before each name refers to the order of the 49 campsites, running north to south. Some of the information in the descriptions is drawn from the series of 8 guidebooks published (and updated) by the Bibbulmun Track Foundation in 2017, 2018 and 2013 which are themselves updates of the original guides published in 1998 by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). One flaw in the updates is that almost all references to "CALM" have been changed to either the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) or the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). This includes crediting DBCA or PWS with the construction of some of the campsite shelters, even ones that, at the time they were built, were located in state forest and would have more likely been built by CALM's forestry division. CALM was formed in March 1985 as a result of a merger of the Forests Department, the National Parks Authority and the wildlife section of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. It was disbanded in June 2006. O

[25] The Grimwade settlement was named in honour of Russell Grimwade (later Sir Russell) who established the Russell Grimwade Prize for postgraduate study of forestry at Oxford University. The settlement had previously been called East Kirup but was renamed in 1949. The conservator of forests at the time of its renaming was Theodore Norman Stoate who, in 1930, was the first recipient of the Russell Grimwade Prize. The Bibbulmun Track used to go through the settlement but no longer does; it is now about 5km away. It was a visit to the settlement after the AFHS conference in Augusta in September 2004 that made me aware of the track – see "The Russell Grimwade Prize", *Australian Forest History Society Newsletter*, No. 42, pp6-8 (in particular, see p7 "Forestry Settlements in Western Australia").
www.foresthistory.org.au/newsletter/afhsnewsletter42.pdf

[26] A comment in the walkers' register made by Stephen Walker on 6/11/22 (not sure if that's 6 November or 11 June) described Grimwade as having "a splendidly Tolkienesque name". Recorded in "Reflections from the registers", *Bibbulmun News,* no. 96, Aug-Nov 2024, p29. *(This issue has not yet posted online.)*

30. Beedulup: After the surrounding national park.
33. Gardner: After both the river (possibly named after Captain Sir Alan Gardner RN)[27] and George Gardner, described in the guidebook as "a local ecologist" but he was much more than that (see below).
34. Maringup (also called Lake Maringup): The original campsite was built in November 1997 by volunteers from the Institute of Foresters of Australia (now Forestry Australia) but the shelter was rebuilt in November 2001 after the original was damaged by a fallen tree.



35. Dog Pool: The original shelter was built in 1998 by volunteers from the Bunnings Treefarms social club but was rebuilt in 2017 after the original was damaged.
38. Long Point: The shelter was built in 1998 by members of the Forest Protection Society (now Timber Communities Australia).
41. Giants: Named after the nearby Valley of the Giants through which the track passes.
43. Boat Harbour and
44. William Bay: Both shelters were built in June 1998 by members of the William Bay National Parks Association and volunteers from the Bibbulmun Track Foundation.
46. West Cape Howe: The shelter was built by the Green Corps program.

H.D. Evans, Minister for Forests, October 1971 to April 1974

As mentioned above, the minister who liked the idea of establishing a long-distance walking track and who sent Geoff Schafer to talk to the Forests Department was H.D. Evans.

Hywel David (Dave) Evans AM was an ALP member of Western Australia's Legislative Assembly (the lower house of parliament) from March 1968 until his retirement in February 1989, representing the seat of Warren. During that time, he had a number of ministerial appointments, including as Minister for Forests from October 1971 to April 1974.[28]

The Dave Evans Bicentennial Tree in Warren National Park near Pemberton was named in his honour. Opened in November 1995,[29] along with the Gloucester Tree and the Diamond Tree, it was one of the three lookout trees open to the public to climb. Unfortunately, all three trees are now closed to climbing.

In June 1993, Evans was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours "In recognition of service to the Western Australian Parliament and to agriculture".[30]

George Gardner

While the Bibbulmun Track guidebook describes George Gardner (1912-2005) as "a local ecologist", he was much more than that.

The George Gardner Collection at the Northcliffe Pioneer Museum (NPM)[31] notes that "he maintained an outstanding interest in the evolutionary events of our planet" and that "the WA Museum and the WA Herbarium became his mentors". The NPM holds his photographs of 500 classified wildflowers found in Northcliffe Forest Park, the local district and nearby Windy Harbour, and displays at least some of his 1200 specimens of rocks and fossils. The display is a gift to the NPM from Jenny Bevan from the School of Earth Sciences at the University of WA, and Alex Bevan, Curator, Earth and Planetary Sciences, WA Museum.

Gardner co-authored scientific papers on archaeology with Charlie Dortch of the University of WA; Andrew Hopper and A.P. Brown named the Cherry Spider Orchid (*Caladenia gardneri*) in his honour – the species listing states that it was "Named after Mr George Gardner (1912-) of Northcliffe, farmer, timber worker and council employee, who has an exceptional knowledge of the natural history, geology and anthropology of the southern forest region, and who was the first to show the senior author this species (in 1974) and recognize it as a distinct *Caladenia*. George has provided useful and congenial assistance to both of us on several subsequent trips in search of interesting and elusive orchids and other plants."[32,33]

In January 1985, Gardner was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in the Australia Day Honours "For service to conservation and to the community".[34]

His autobiography, *Making the Best of It: My Early Years in Rural Western Australia*, was published in 2000.

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[27] Government of Western Australia, nd. "History of River Names", Landgate Western Australia's land information authority. web.archive.org/web/20211021235058/http://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/maps-and-imagery/wa-geographic-names/name-history/History-of-river-names#G

[28] "David Evans (Western Australian Politician". en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Evans_(Western_Australian_politician) and "Hywel Evans", Members' biographical register. www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/library/MPHistoricalData.nsf/(Lookup)/560DAD1638E4FC38482577E50028A5DD

[29] Peter Foss, WA Minister for the Environment, 1995. Ministerial Statement: "Official opening of Dave Evans Bicentennial Tree (near Pemberton). web.archive.org/web/20190905101842/https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/Court/1995/11/Official-opening-of-Dave-Evans-Bicentennial-Tree-(near-Pemberton).aspx

[30] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Australian Honours Search Facility". honours.pmc.gov.au/honours/search (Published originally in *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, no. S156, 14 June 1993, p4.)

[31] The Northcliffe Pioneer Museum. northcliffe.org.au/museum_tour

[32] Stephen D. Hopper and A.P. Brown, "Contributions to Western Australian orchidology: 2. New taxa and circumscriptions in Caladenia (Spider, Fairy and Dragon Orchids of Western Australia)", *Nuytsia: Bulletin of the Western Australian Herbarium*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2, 2001), p77. archive.org/details/nuytsia14westa/page/77

[33] *Caladenia gardneri* Hopper & A.P.Br. Cherry Spider Orchid. florabase.dbca.wa.gov.au/browse/profile/15351

[34] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, "Australian Honours Search Facility". honours.pmc.gov.au/honours/search (Published originally in *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, no. S17, 26 January 1985, p6.)

Robert Onfray's Blogs and Other Writing

Robert Onfray continues to provide monthly updates on two different topics each month – stories about travelling around Australia, and on forestry. They are published on his website www.robertonfray.com. His website includes details of how to subscribe to his e-mail list, and he also has a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/robertonfraywriter.

The following articles on Forestry have been published since our April 2025 issue.

May: Hello darkness, my old friend – Australia's reckless closure of coal-fired power plants

June: A valley forged in timber

July: A billion-dollar exercise in looking virtuous, while watching the bush go to ruin

August: A case study in folly #5: Firestorm of incompetence – what Yankees Gap says about modern fire management

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.

His forthcoming book on the forestry history of Fraser Island is being edited and he hopes that it will be out by the end of the year.

Robert's articles are also published by *Australian Rural & Regional News* arr.news. He also helps manage the AFHS website.

Western Australia's Ghost Towns

The "People of Western Australia's Ghost Towns" is a project of FamilyHistoryWA and will be its contribution to Western Australia's Bicentenary in 2029 and will also mark the society's 50th anniversary. The project aims to create a comprehensive index of the individuals who once lived in Western Australia's ghost towns, to locate all their records and tell their stories. The website is at ghostswa.au.

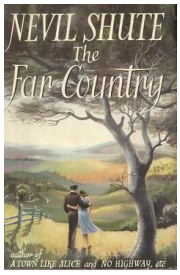
Western Australia's size, its vast distances, its boom and bust and unforgiving climate have left many places where once there was life and now has gone or almost gone. What remains may only be a crumbling structure or grid patterns of a few streets. The project will ensure that these places and the people are not forgotten. It will include information from all found sources as well as historical, demographic and geographical data, on all known ghost towns, abandoned towns, settlements and similar places.

A search of the alphabetical list of places at ghostswa.au/alphalist for the word "timber" brings up 58 responses, but FamilyHistoryWA makes no claims to completeness. On 21 August 2025, an article was posted on the website about Woop Woop, a timber mill situated about 70km south of Collie in the south-west, although is more about the term than the town – ghostswa.au/2025/08/21/woopwoop-01. However, it does say that Woop Woop "only lasted for three years (1925-1928) but in that time it had six huts for single men, two houses, a boarding house, an office, and the Mill itself." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the earliest reference to the term "woop woop" is from 4 December 1897 when it was used in Victorian newspaper *The Oakleigh Leader*.[1,2]

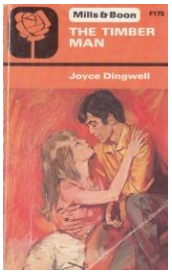
Novels on the Timber Industry, Part 3

By Fintán Ó Laighin

This is becoming a longer series than expected. Our last couple of issues have included articles on novels with the Australian and New Zealand forestry and timber industry as the background. Peter Davies has added another – Nevil Shute's *The Far Country* (published in 1952) which follows the story of Jennifer Morton who travels from England to Australia where she meets Carl Zlinter, a Czechoslovakian refugee who is working at a timber camp near Mount Buller as a condition of his free passage to Australia. Peter says it's a lovely story.

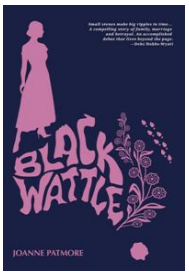


Cover of the original edition, published by William Heinemann, London, 1952



The Timber Man, published by Mills & Boon, May 1974, (Fiesta promotion, F173)

I have previously included images of various editions of Joyce Dingwell's books *The House in the Timberwoods* and *The Timber Man*. Pictured above is another I've come across, a 1974 reprint of her 1964 novel.



In August 2025, Bridgetown (WA) author Joanne Patmore's first novel, *Black Wattle*, was released by Hawkeye Publishing. It is a fictional account of life in the Group Settlements Scheme. In an interview on the publisher's website, she says that she is "working on (her) second novel, *Wooden Town* (which) charts the lives of people who worked the timber mills in Western Australia's South West in the early 1900s".[3]

[1] Oxford English Dictionary. www.oed.com/dictionary/woop-woop_n?tab=meaning_and_use#14310381.
[2] "Sporting News. Cycling Notes." by Scorcher & Co, "Everyone declared the day's outing had been thoroughly enjoyable, and the next place to be visited is Woopwoop", *The Oakleigh Leader* (North Brighton), 4 Dec 1897, p3. trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/6687112
[3] "Joanne Patmore". hawkeyebooks.com.au/pages/joanne-patmore and hawkeyebooks.com.au/collections/new-release/products/black-wattle

BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS AND A FILM

Thanks to Michael Roche for his advice about the New Zealand-related publications included below.

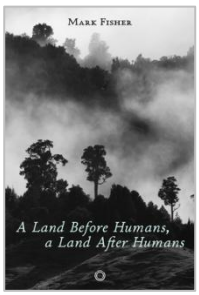
Hazel Phillips, 2025. *Fire & Ice: Secrets, histories, treasures and mysteries of Tongariro National Park*. Massey University Press
ISBN 9781991016843. 400pp.
www.masseypress.ac.nz/books/fire-and-ice

From the publisher's notes.

One woman's quest to uncover secrets in a mountain world.

What lies off-track in Tongariro National Park? This engrossing book contains stories of ghosts, fires, avalanches, plane wrecks, sly grogging, secret spots and more from around Ngāuruhoe, Tongariro and Ruapehu — a place of wild and chaotic grandeur.

This well-illustrated and lively exploration of the history of Ruapehu is told by a self-confessed 'Ruapehu addict' who has an uncanny talent for persuading a cast of great characters to join her on her explorations and investigations. With more than 200 historic and present-day images and 25 maps, it's a must-have for all who love skiing, climbing and tramping around this mighty mountain.



Mark Fisher, 2025. *A Land Before Humans, A Land After Humans*.
5m Books, Great Easton, Essex UK.
5mbooks.com/product/a-land-before-humans-a-land-after-humans

From the publisher's notes.

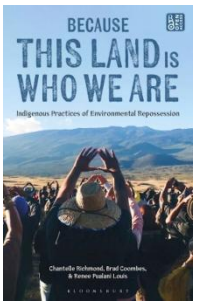
Some species survive reliant on conservation, some may survive eluding our knowing, some may not survive despite our efforts, and some may survive by adapting to and integrating with human worlds.

New Zealand is a unique and fascinating country as a case study for managing invasive species. Because of its history we know a lot about species introductions, and because of its geographical position, as a relatively small remote island, the potential for dealing with invasive species may be more effective than elsewhere. Moreover, the fragility of its ecosystems makes it relatively easy to see the impact of one species upon another. Nature and people shape the country's ecology: from its geological and biological beginnings to the relatively recent arrival of people and the changes wrought, to the wide-ranging efforts of individuals and communities to protect and enhance treasured species and environments. Among them, an ambitious Predator Free 2050 initiative to rid the country of some of its unwanted species.

The issue is a complex and interesting one. There are ethical considerations – which species are protected, and which destroyed? How are they destroyed? What are the unforeseen consequences? There are also tensions between preservation and the use of natural resources, and ultimately our relationship to the environment, how we live.

A Land Before Humans, A Land After Humans explores these issues. An invaluable resource for environment, ecology, animal welfare and ethics students, researchers and policy makers, the book takes New Zealand as a case study and looks at the practical and ethical considerations of dealing with invasive species.

The author is a recently retired scientist with more than 40 years' experience in farming, research and philosophy. He draws on history, literature, common understandings and personal experiences to create a distinctive narrative. Mark was until 2021 a Principal Adviser to the NZ Ministry for Primary Industries (formerly Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) and Director of Kotare Bioethics. He has been a board member of the Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council, the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, and was the New Zealand chair of the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching.



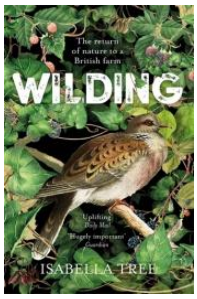
Chantelle Richmond, Brad Coombes and Renee Pualani Louis, 2024. *Because This Land Is Who We Are: Indigenous Practices of Environmental Repossession*. Bloomsbury Publishing, Sydney.
www.bloomsbury.com/au/because-this-land-is-who-we-are-9781350247666

From the publisher's notes.

Because This Land Is Who We Are is an exploration of environmental repossession, told through a collaborative case study approach, and engaging with Indigenous communities in Canada (Anishinaabe), Hawai'i (Kanaka Maoli) and Aotearoa (Maori). The co-authors are all Indigenous scholars, community leaders and activists who are actively engaged in the movements underway in these locations, and able to describe the unique and common strategies of repossession practices taking place in each community.

This open access book celebrates Indigenous ways of knowing, relating to and honouring the land, and the authors' contributions emphasize the efforts taking place in their own Indigenous land. Through engagement with these varying cultural imperatives, the wider goal of *Because This Land Is Who We Are* is to broaden both theoretical and applied concepts of environmental repossession, and to empower any Indigenous community around the world which is struggling to assert its rights to land.

The ebook editions of this book are available open access under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence on bloomsburycollections.com. Open access was funded by Knowledge Unlatched.



Isabella Tree, 2019. *Wilding: The Return of Nature to a British Farm*. Picador. ISBN 9781509805105. www.panmacmillan.com.au/9781509805105

From the publisher's notes.

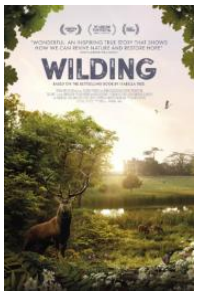
'The remarkable story of an astounding transformation' George Monbiot, author of *Feral*.

In *Wilding*, Isabella Tree tells the story of the 'Knepp experiment', a pioneering rewilding project in West Sussex, using free-roaming grazing animals to create new habitats for wildlife. Part gripping memoir, part fascinating account of the ecology of our countryside, *Wilding* is, above all, an inspiring story of hope.

Forced to accept that intensive farming on the heavy clay of their land at Knepp was economically unsustainable, Isabella Tree and her husband Charlie Burrell made a spectacular leap of faith: they decided to step back and let nature take over. Thanks to the introduction of free-roaming cattle, ponies, pigs and deer – proxies of the large animals that once roamed Britain – the 3,500 acre project has seen extraordinary increases in wildlife numbers and diversity in little over a decade.

Extremely rare species, including turtle doves, nightingales, peregrine falcons, lesser spotted woodpeckers and purple emperor butterflies, are now breeding at Knepp, and populations of other species are rocketing. The Burrells' degraded agricultural land has become a functioning ecosystem again, heaving with life – all by itself.

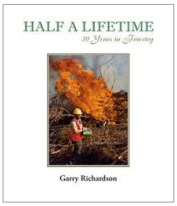
Personal and inspirational, *Wilding* is an astonishing account of the beauty and strength of nature, when it is given as much freedom as possible.



Wilding, 2023. Passion Pictures, London. www.wildingmovie.com. Director: David Allen. Writer: Isabella Tree.

From the distributor's notes.

Based on the bestselling book by Isabella Tree, *Wilding* tells the story of a young couple that bets on nature for the future of their failing, four-hundred-year-old estate. The young couple battles entrenched tradition, and dares to place the fate of their farm in the hands of nature. Ripping down the fences, they set the land back to the wild and entrust its recovery to a motley mix of animals both tame and wild. It is the beginning of a grand experiment that will become one of the most significant rewilding experiments in Europe.



Garry Richardson, 2009. *Half A Lifetime: 39 Years in Forestry*. Forty South, Lindisfarne TAS 7015. ISBN 9780980655506. shop.fortysouth.com.au/products/half-a-lifetime-39-years-in-forestry

From the publisher's notes.

Foreword written by Bob Gordon, Managing Director, Forestry Tasmania:

"Garry Richardson has crafted his personal history with 'The Forestry' which also highlights and gives life to many of the changes that have occurred in the last 40 years in the industry.

This publication adds to Garry's impressive achievements of publications from specific histories to panoramic photographs.

Garry's description of his working life with forestry from young, inexperienced trainee technical forester straight out of school through to an experienced and knowledgeable practitioner who acted as a reviewer and mentor, particularly during the introduction of the Forest Practices Code, is full of anecdotes which reflect the huge range of skills and life experiences which accumulate during a forestry career.

Garry's wit and wisdom comes through as he describes some of the most unusual events, and the friendships that developed both with other Forestry Tasmania staff and the broader forest sector shine through.

I had the pleasure of working with Garry from 1988 to 1990 when I was District Forester at Fingal ("Bob was hardly ever there"). His willingness to accept challenges such as being one of the auditors for the new forest practices system and his practical approach to finding workable solutions to operational problems were the hallmark of Garry's approach to work.

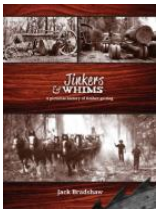
Garry always made it clear if he didn't agree with a proposal but was generally prepared to give it a go anyway.

He willingly shared his knowledge and experience and often acted as a guide and mentor to new employees and trainees.

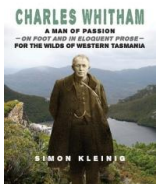
Garry's book is an interesting read and gives insight into the world of forestry. I commend the book and Garry's achievements."

We seem to have missed Garry Richardson's book when it was published in 2009. Copies are still available from the publisher.

In Brief



Jack Bradshaw has advised that Hesperian Press will be publishing a revised edition of his 2012 book, *Jinkers and Whims* (reviewed in our September 2013 newsletter www.foresthistory.org.au/newsletter/afhsnewsletter61.pdf, p6). A publication date has yet to be advised. The Hesperian Press website is hesperianpress.com.

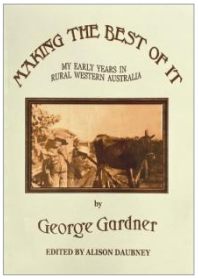


Simon Kleinig, 2025. *Charles Whitham: A man of passion – on foot and in eloquent prose – for the wilds of Western Tasmania*. Forty South, Lindisfarne TAS 7015. shop.fortysouth.com.au/products/charles-whitham-a-man-of-passion-on-foot-and-in-eloquent-prose-for-the-wilds-of-western-tasmania-by-simon-kleinig-pb

From the publisher's notes.

Charles Whitham's name is etched into the history and geography of the rugged, mountainous landscape of western Tasmania. Today, four geographical features in the area bear his name, and his oft-reprinted 1924 book on its riches and beauty has become a collectors' item.

Whitham's childhood was spent in the exotic lands of northern India. In 1886, his family migrated to Tasmania where, at age 16, he ran away from home to make his own way in the world. He found work as a railway clerk, leading him in 1897 to remote and isolated Queenstown, his home for the next 27 years. Despite personal turmoil, these were years in which he made his mark. He contributed hugely to the civic and cultural life of the town, but it was his explorations of the surrounding rugged landscape and his rich written accounts of his journeys for which he is most remembered.



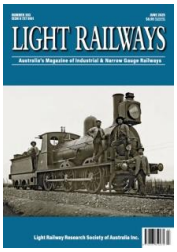
George Gardner, 2000 (edited by Alison Daubney). *Making the Best of It: My Early Years in Rural Western Australia*, Northcliffe WA 6262. ISBN 0646396668.

From the publisher's notes.

George Gardner was born in Pingelly in 1912. As many families did, George's family struggled during the 1930s Depression and George describes the family fishing, cutting firewood, keeping chooks and growing vegetables to make the best of it. In 1943, after working in many locations, George settled in Northcliffe. His passionate interest in the ecology of the south-west, particularly flora, earned him recognition from professional botanists. He was awarded an OAM for his contribution to the environment and his local community. His autobiography adds to the social history of rural life in Western Australia in the first half of the twentieth century.

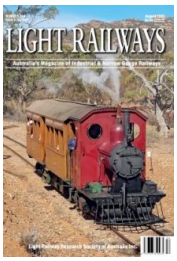
Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways, June 2025 (LR303) and August 2025 (LR304). Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN: 0727 8101. www.lrrsa.org.au www.facebook.com/people/lrrsa-Light-Railway-Research-Society-of-Australia-Inc/100064543968038

All back issues of Light Railways are available from the LRRSA's website shop.lrrsa.org.au –nos. 1 to 292 are available as free downloads, while nos. 293 to 304 are $8.95 each (plus postage) for printed copies or $5.50 each for PDF downloads.



LR303 is a rare issue with no articles or news on timber railways, although the letters page has one from ER (Ted) Goodwin that refers to the proposed purchase of a Garratt locomotive in November 1938 by Victorian Railways to use "mainly for the anticipated extra pulp wood traffic on the Walhalla Line in Gippsland due to commence towards the end of 1939 when the new APM (Maryvale) commences operation". However, Mr Goodwin says that the proposal did not proceed "due to the January 1939 bushfires and commencement of World War 2".

There is also a letter from Norman Houghton (also a member of the AFHS) who, responding to an editorial in the April issue, "suggest(s) that the LRRSA sets up its own digital presence through some sort of managed archive arrangement". Food for thought for the AFHS as well perhaps.



The lead article in LR304 is by Ian McNeil, titled "The Burraga Copper Mine Firewood Tramway" in the NSW central highlands, about 50km south of Bathurst and 155km west of Sydney. The mine opened in 1880 but an extensive upgrade in 1899 "required 200 tons of firewood a day to fire the furnaces and raise steam in multiple large boilers across the site".

While wood was initially carried by horse and bullock team, "the surrounding countryside had been progressively stripped of its forest cover" leading to a recommendation from the mine manager for the construction of a "steam tramway to reach virgin forest country six miles north of Burraga". A line was surveyed in August 1907 but was not constructed; the price of copper had declined and the company was closed for four years. A new route was surveyed in May 1912, construction commenced in July and the 8 mile line was completed in December.

The article includes maps of the Lloyd Copper Company's Firewood Tramway (1913-1919), plotted from satellite imagery, Forestry Corporation data, old parish maps and GPS field mapping. One map shows the proposed 1907 line.

The back cover features a full page photo of a large ash log completing its descent of a three-railed tramway incline. The photo was taken in the early 1940s in Marysville, Victoria, in the aftermath of the 1939 bushfires. Published originally in *Walkabout* magazine, it is drawn from Peter Evans's book *Wooden Rails and Green Gold* which is available from the LRRSA.