



Australia's Ever-changing Forests VII

Proceedings of the Ninth National Conference of
the Australian Forest History Society Inc.

Edited by Sue Feary and Rob Robinson

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AUSTRALIAN FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY Inc.

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Front Cover image: Unknown Artist – *'The Valley Lakes Mount Gambier'*, 1886 showing Woods and Forests nursery adjacent Leg of Mutton Lake. *Source*: Riddoch Gallery.

Title page image: Nursery at Kapunda Reservoir, 1904. *Source*: Fenner School of Environment and Society, ANU. Kapunda Nursery was established in 1882 and the first crop of 50,510 seedlings covered 22 ornamental species in pots, bamboo tubes and open rooted stock, most of which were for free distribution, but several thousand were planted over the next decade around the Kapunda Reservoir. By 1890 Kapunda Nursery was producing 308,120 seedlings per year in an effort to meet the almost insatiable demand from landowners in the Central Districts of the State. Of these, 101,000 were 'White Mulberry', 101,000 'Sugar Gums' and 30,000 'River Red Gums'. The nursery closed in 1925 when free distribution stopped.

Contents

Contributing Authors

Preface

1. The Waite Arboretum – Science, Trees and Technology
Jennifer Gardner
 2. Early Forest management in Scotland’s Plantations
Sybil Jack
 3. Forestry in New Zealand’s Changing Landscape
Ewan McGregor
 4. Environmental Wicked Problem –solving: A case for History
Lizzie Summerfield
 5. Plantations and Playwrights – a history of Indigenous Australians’ involvement in the plantation industry [forthcoming]
Sue Feary
 6. Julia Marion Harvey Hale, Sawmiller
Peter Evans
 7. A review of the early years of jarrah dieback research in Western Australia
Elaine Davison
 8. Surrey Hills, the birthplace of industrial-scale eucalypt plantations in Australia
Robert Onfray
 9. Mueller’s Legacy: The Yates in Melbourne’s Rotary Park.
Ian Ferguson
 10. A Pictorial history of South Australian forestry
Rob Robinson
 11. The lives of forty South Australian foresters
John Dargavel
 12. History and consequences of limited eucalypt forests in the lower south east of South Australia
Brian Gepp
 13. The South Australian Press and the forest influence debate: 1830-1954
Stephen Legg
 14. The Planted Landscape: forest transformation in the Upper Clarence catchment, northern NSW
Jane Lennon
 15. Evolution of sawmills in east coast eucalypt forests in the 1950s.
Curly Humphreys
 16. Cork oak plantation trials in Victoria
John Taylor
 17. Playing sad havoc with our forests: foresters versus railway sleeper-hewers in Victoria
Andre Brett
 18. Forum Summary: South Australian plantation ownership and management-the past influencing future prospects [forthcoming]
Rob Robinson
- An Ode to Mark Allen
Stephen Legg

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

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John Dargavel	Emeritus Fellow, Fenner School, Australian National University, ACT
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Peter Evans	Semi-retired independent scholar, who has written widely on industrial and forest history, Vic
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Brian Gepp	Retired wildlife ecologist, SA
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Sybil Jack	Retired academic, with a main interest in forests and forest ecology in sixteenth and seventeenth century Britain
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Robert Onfray	Professional forester, Manager Field & Land Access Southern Region Department of Natural Resources & Mines, Qld
Rob Robinson	General Manager, Forestry, Department for Primary Industries and Regions, SA
Elizabeth Summerfield	Independent scholar with an interest in history and environmental problem solving
John Taylor	Retired forester, practicing farm forestry in northern NSW

PREFACE

The Australian Forest History Society was formed in 1988 with the objective of advancing 'historical understanding of human interactions with forest and woodland environments'. The Society pursues this objective in a number of ways, including convening conferences to enable people to share their experiences, research and knowledge, and by publishing conference proceedings. Hard copies of previous conferences are out of print but they are all available via the Society's website and occasionally in out-of-the-way bookshops.

The previous eight conferences have reflected the diverse range of forest history interests, from exploring how different sectors of Australian society value forests, histories of forestry and foresters, social histories and biographies, and political and policy matters influencing forest histories. There has also been strong representation by forest historians from New Zealand and elsewhere in the world. This conference is no different, although the chosen theme of planted forests provided something of a focus for contributors.

This volume contains 17 chapters based on papers presented at the Society's ninth conference held in the very attractive and comfortable City Hall in Mount Gambier's CBD, South Australia, from 21-24 October 2015. Another chapter summarises discussions from a short forum held at the end of the conference on current forest-related issues faced by the community in and around South Australia and especially Mount Gambier.

Mount Gambier has a rich and unique plantation history commencing with the first flush of experimentation and trials in the mid-1870s. The South Australian Government reacted to an alarming decline in the supply of native timbers by establishing Australia's first commercial forest plantations at Bundaleer and Wirrabara in the colony's Mid North, and shortly after within the dormant volcanic craters at Mount Gambier. It took several decades before the radiata pine's remarkable bounty was realised. Industrial scale plantings began in 1907 and the region's forest and forest products industry has never looked back.

Around 27 delegates attended the conference, joined by several local members of the Institute of Foresters Australia. As well as presentations, the conference included a half day field trip to Mimosa Tree Farms just outside Mount Gambier, and a full day field trip taking in sawmills, logging museums and forest reserves, the World Heritage listed Naracoorte Caves and an excellent lunch at Hollick wines.

Delegates were also invited to attend an evening launch of an exhibition of historic forestry photographs collated by volunteers and ForestrySA and housed by the City of Mount Gambier library. This occasion was enhanced when John Dargavel presented 38 glass lantern slides of scenes of South Australian forests from the first decades of the 20th century he had discovered in the Noel Butlin archives at the Australian National University.

The sequence of papers in this volume loosely follows the order in which they were given at the conference. Dr Jennifer Gardner opened the conference with her keynote speech, tracing the history of The University of Adelaide's Waite Arboretum from Peter Waite's visionary bequest in 1928 which established this significant scientific collection, through its evolving collection policies, and into the digital age.

Papers from the first morning's session had something of an international flavour. Sybil Jack's paper on the start of plantations in Scotland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries delved further into their history, building on Jan Oosthoek's 2013 book, *Conquering the Highlands*. The techniques and the high standard of plantation practice that Scottish foresters developed spread around the

world; notably brought to South Australia and other states in the nineteenth century by John Ednie Brown.

Our NZ visitor Ewan McGregor, spoke on the dramatic transformation of New Zealand landscapes since the arrival of the Maori and their fire-sticks and then European settlers, clearing for agriculture and growing sheep. Removal of old growth forests and introduction of cultivated trees, predominantly exotics has played a critical role in providing timber, shade and shelter, amenity, fruit production, erosion control and ecology. Ewan used many images from his local area, the Hawkes Bay region, to illustrate his talk.

Lizzie Summerfield's paper was a little different from anything we had heard at a Society conference, with a theme of solving 'wicked' [complex and multi-causal] policy problems. Using a forest history case study and two famous foresters, including South Australian George Goyder, she argued that history has a role to play in 'wicked' problem solving by generating innovative solutions. Lizzie further demonstrated that historical evidence can also support an evidence base for management theories used in the training of future leaders.

The afternoon session, together with that on Friday morning dealt with forest histories across Australia, excluding South Australia, which was the theme of a separate session. The session opened with a presentation by Sue Feary on the important role plantations have played in addressing Indigenous social and economic disadvantage, by providing not only timber for housing, but also training and employment opportunities in Australia's remotest areas. This was followed by Peter Evan's winning presentation on a unique character - Julia Marion Harvey Hale - a female sawmiller who took on the bureaucracy in Victoria and won. Peter noted that her bequest to the University of Melbourne's Department of Forestry, continues to influence professional forestry today.

Elaine Davison traced the history of research into jarrah dieback in Western Australia, demonstrating that careful investigation of unpublished reports was able to show that deaths of jarrah due to waterlogging had become confused with deaths of mid and understorey plants due to the pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

Robert Onfray gave the final paper of the day, with a compelling argument for Surrey Hills, in northwest Tasmania to be recognised as the first industrial scale eucalypt plantation in Australia. A private company driven by the need for improved eucalypt regeneration and growth in a harsh and difficult subalpine climate started experimental and trial plantings. It progressed into a significant plantation program that led the way in the development of silvicultural practices, tree breeding and research facilities at the time.

John Dargavel began the Friday session by presenting a paper on behalf of Ian Ferguson on a group of Yate trees planted in Rotary Park, Melbourne, which have been identified as having been raised from seed collected in 1867 by Ferdinand von Mueller, a remarkable systematic botanist and the first Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. This paper replaced one entitled 'It's how things were; it must be true; it was on the file' which was to be presented by Society member Mark Allen, who was unfortunately unable to attend at the last minute due to illness.

Jane Lennon spoke of land use history in the Upper Clarence valley in northern NSW, from Aboriginal settlement, through 19th Century clearing for farming to the creation of landscapes planted to softwoods and more recently hardwoods under now defunct managed investment schemes. Jane's own property, Bottle Creek, is something of a microcosm of the dramatic landscape and social change experienced in the surrounding area and shows that farm forestry may be less unsettling than large scale farm replacement.

Curly Humphrey's paper showcased his profound knowledge of sawmilling, through examining longitudinal studies of sawmill productivity between 1953 and 1960 in Queensland. He discussed the

social, economic and technological factors which affected productivity during this time. John Taylor took us on a journey through the historical, political, silvicultural, and commercial aspects of cork oak planting trials in the 1960s in Victoria trials and the way in which the Forests Commission implemented them.

Finally Andre Brett, *sans* powerpoint explored how the development of Victoria's railway network, beginning in the 1850s, affected forests, and how those responsible for the protection of forests met the challenges created by a clash between developmental and conservational ideals.

Thursday morning's session was devoted to South Australian forest histories, beginning with Rob Robinson's presentation of the many documents, maps, illustrations and photographs depicting South Australia's remarkable plantation history from the 1870s. These are not only important primary sources for research into this development, they are also fascinating and beautiful items in their own right. John Dargavel's insight into the lives of 40 South Australia foresters was drawn from a joint project of the Society, Institute of Foresters and the National Centre for Biography at the ANU. The manner in which people became foresters, and made their careers in South Australia or elsewhere was examined in four periods between the 1870s and the 1990s.

Based on research into departmental records, Brian Gepp examined the consequences of large scale plantation forestry and agriculture on native forests and discussed rare examples of both long uncut and long unburnt remnants of stringy bark forest as well as regrowth from 1937.

Stephen Legg used late nineteenth century notions that forests could improve climate in his historical-geographic analysis to highlight the role of the South Australian Press in the forest influence debate.

Chapter 18 is a summary of a forum held on the final afternoon of the conference, prepared by Rob Robinson. Chaired by John Dargavel, the forum gave voice to local concerns surrounding changes in plantation management in South Australia. In particular, the three speakers, Jerry Leech, Jim O'Hehir and David Geddes were able to demonstrate the relevance of past forest history in informing present and future decisions.

No Society conference proceedings would be complete without a poem from our resident poet, retired forester Mark Allen. Sadly, Mark was unable to attend the conference due to illness. Fortunately, Stephen Legg stepped up and displayed remarkable poetic ingenuity with an Ode to Mark which is reproduced in these proceedings.

The volume of papers is a tribute to the aim of the Society, in bringing together so many different perspectives and stories, all pertinent to our understanding of forests and people and collectively giving us a rich and varied record of forest history in Australia and throughout the world.

Sue Feary and Rob Robinson

December 2016