

# An ode to Mark Allen - or you can teach new tricks to an old doggerel.

Here is a precis of what you missed, that 'must be true, so you can add it to your file'.

But for the troubles that a dicky heart has to the forester's bard brought on,  
Mark would have joined us in Mt Gambier – the home of Adam Lindsay Gord-on.  
We send best wishes that you will get well soon - from a land that by volcanoes has been shattered,  
And remember Gordon's lines that in the end it was only friendship and courage that mattered.

Jennifer spoke of the Waite bequest, that established that institute's arboretum,  
where endangered plants are protected midst the sugar gums,  
lest the possums in the hollows don't eat 'em;  
The deed also called for a pleasure ground, and from 1924 research to stop agriculture dropping to its knees,  
While now a smart-phone app using GIS gives visitors a virtual tour with detail on all 2,400 trees.

Sybil told how the 18<sup>th</sup> C. Enlightened Scots on private estates planted in the 'wilderness way' rather than strictly by geometry,  
But in so doing those canny Scots, changed both lowland and highland ecology,  
They planted here, they planted there, of mostly larch and spruce,  
And soon converted to capitalism, the land of Robert the Bruce.

Ewen's passion for arboriculture was evident from the Land of the Long White Cloud.  
Modelled on Hoskin's *Making of the English Landscape* he spoke of the massive transformation that the bush has endured in only 800 years;  
From Maori and Pakeha the land was transformed, and is now an historical artefact, borne of hard fought blood, sweat and tears.  
Fire, grazing, refrigeration, crawler tractors, and aerial top-dressing all brought changes to the hill country farms, while plantations prospered of Douglas fir and Radiata pine,  
but with the efforts of planters like Ewen there is hope of a more environmentally-sustainable future further down the line.

Lizzie compared conservationists George Goyder and Gifford Pinchot highlighting their parents' approach to schooling,  
and found that they championed Pelottzi's 'learned holism' which shaped their leadership – no foolin'.  
They learned with their head and their heart as well as being practical with their hands,  
In so doing they brought a more effective approach to 'wicked problems' and transformed their country's forested lands.

And so from this biographer's initial research query, comes an innovative historiography that adds value to leadership theory.

Sue explored complex connections between plantations and indigenous people,  
research begun by a serendipitous find of a book of plays 'neath the Hay Fire station steeple.  
Oral history fieldwork confirmed the economic benefits of forestry work, and protection of land, to  
communities so often marginalised, from WA to the Tiwi,  
and in the south pacific islands and Aotearoa and its first peoples the Iwi.

Julia Hale sawmill owner, was the subject of the talk by Peter.

An astute business woman, civic-minded matriarch, and generous public benefactor with a disdain  
for local authority – I would sure like to meet her.

But that's all too late for she passed in '64 after a long battle with ill health and especially with the  
Forests Commission over roads classification,

The latter battle dragged through the courts, but settlement in her favour with substantial damages  
awarded, at last brought some pacification.

Elaine's fascinating work dealt with research into jarrah dieback and revealed some of the pitfalls of  
pathology,

When those in the past missed what eventually emerged to be a complex of factors related to forest  
ecology,

The historian of science's valuable work forces reflection during a time to pause,

And revealed that water-logging and phytophthora could both be the dieback's cause.

Robert discoursed on Surrey Hills with meticulous documentation,

to trace the history of one of Tassie's and Australia's largest and most productive plantation.

The trials and tribulations of finding suitable species in a region where frost is the norm,

Eventuated in the selection of shining gum – or nitens - as the only tree to outlast the storm.

Other metaphoric tempests intervened to stave off the success of pulp and woodchip,

These included managing the pepper bush understorey, fighting insect pests, and more recently  
maintaining continuity despite many changes in ownership.

At the AFHS dinner we were regaled by the plea for more tree hollows by Brian,

But members' indignant stories of damage by long-billed corellas and yellow-tailed black cockatoos  
soon had that wildlife ecologist sighin'.

Rob showed fascinating historic maps and photos to start the conference's new day,

And contextualised it by showing the development of now plantation-dependent forestry in his  
home state of SA.

Dargavel's forty South Australian foresters was a biographers dream,

From obituaries and citations came the information that he could glean.  
To compile a list of great and good, as well as those with lower profiles,  
Of those, now dead, who worked in SA forests, across the dusty miles.  
John showed the change in personal attributes noted in obituaries,  
From moral traits like fidelity, to attitudes and actions, and finally idiosyncrasies.  
He grouped them by generation, and showed over time the incredible transformation,  
Particularly that wrought after World War II by professionalization and higher education.

Brian returned to speak of the value of archival data that should be made publically available for free,  
Then followed with lavish illustration of specimens including what he dubbed the King and Queen tree.

Stephen's foray into press debates, focussed on the alleged influence of forests on rain,  
And showed how incredibly persistent was that popular myth despite mounting scientific disdain.

The afternoon fieldtrip took us around the traps, including crater lakes and model farm,  
After a guided tour of trial plantations, lunch at a bushman's hut was filled with rural charm.  
Leg of Mutton Lake was a misnomer – a real toponymic leap,  
But the verdant exotic treescape down there was cool, even if the path was steep!

Final morn, attention turned to the history of Melbourne's Yates,  
And whether or not these magnificent trees were planted by Von Mueller or his mates.  
Ian Ferguson's research, as read by John, focussed on Rotary Park, and the link to WA,  
Tracing the Baron's seed collecting trips in the Stirling ranges, and south down Denmark way.  
From 1873 stripped of staff and cash old Ferdi did it tough- so he used of all his own money to fund  
his research into eucalypts and other botanical stuff.  
But whether the trees can be attributed to his collecting trips, or not as some naysayers said,  
All historians know, it's hard to decide, when your subjects are so long dead.

A classical historical geographer, Jane's paper detailed the final chapter and the last of three,  
To tell of landscape change in the Upper Clarence, over the last century.  
Of Lunatic Reef, and Bunabo, in lands so long forgotten,  
Of settlers, and millers and gains from logs from methods ill-begotten;  
The 'forest reforms' are among the greatest challenges the landscape's ever seen,  
And the greenies have caused the bush to return way up at Pickupene.  
But what of the future, it's uncertain you know, over resources stakeholders vie,  
And poor plantations are doomed up their – of eucalyptus gunna die.

Curly considered hardwood mills in SE Queensland through two case studies – reports from about 1950,

One outlined the old steam power and the other a few years later showed revolutionary change - not the least in productivity.

He examined the social context of shortages, growth and economic regulation, that presented the owners of mills with new challenges right across the nation.

A fascinating story of myriad change traced through the mills evolution –

With incremental shifts across the board that resulted in a revolution.

John Taylor delivered an erudite piece, on cork oak trials in plantations across Victoria.

From the 1960s foresters tried for twenty years, but the problems they proved weighty,

To such an extent that the government decided ‘to pull the cork’ around the year 1980.

The records were scant, the detective work tough, there is much that we still don’t know,

Of promising trials, of why, where and when - those little Portuguese acorns did not grow.

Newcomer Bret went ‘sans Power point’ to deal with railways and political troubles brewing,

From the battles that old George Perrin had had over the issue of sleeper-hewing.

Timber sawn or hewn was an issue those days regarding the best method for a railway tie,

But I typed up these notes before Bret delivered his speech,

So here I will let sleeping dogs lie.

Signed: An Admirer.