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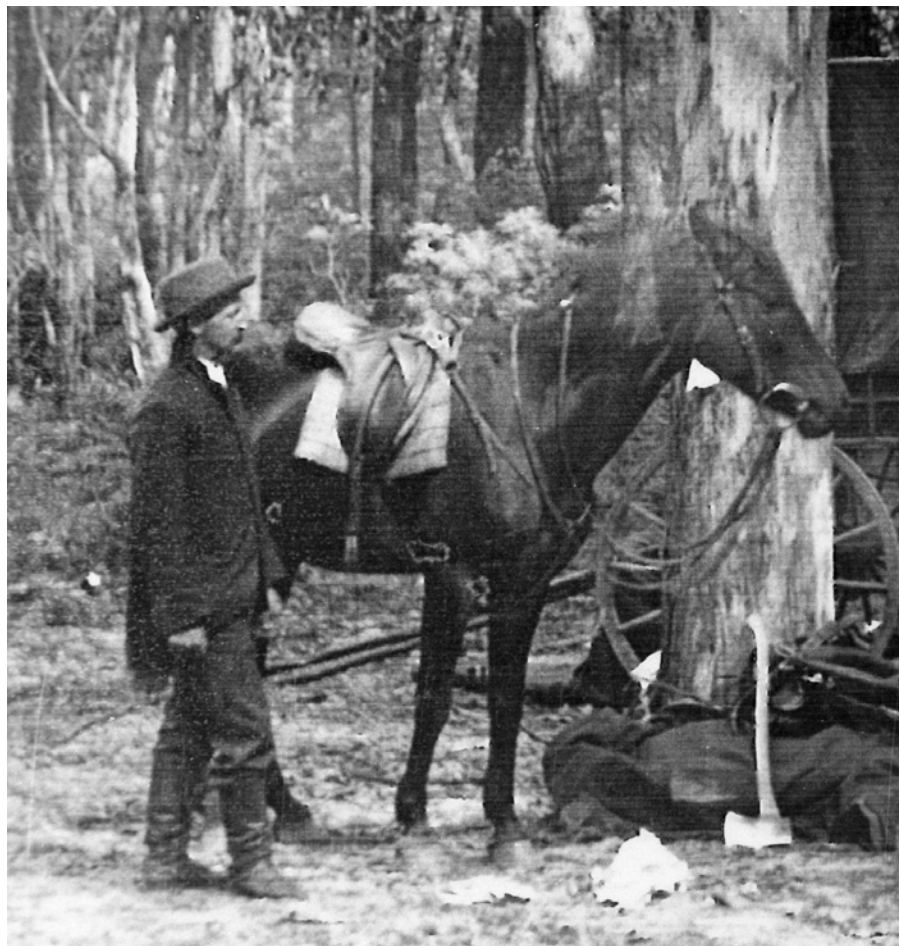
# Forest History

SOCIETY Inc.

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**Newsletter No. 43**  
**April 2006**

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



*Victorian Forester Thomas Derham Bailes in his camp at Mount Cole.*

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The history of Australian forests is often strongly influenced by the work of individuals, some well known, and some long forgotten. If this issue of the AFHS newsletter has an identifiable theme, it lies in the story of some of those individuals.

### **TOM BAILES, MOUNT COLE FORESTER**

Thomas Derham Bailes arrived at Beaufort, Victoria, in 1899 to take up the post of Forester for the Mount Cole Reserve. He stayed for thirty-eight years in his official capacity and, like most foresters, displayed a passion for protecting the forests under his care from foolish and wasteful exploitation. While we do not know whether or not he was formally trained as a forester, he appears to have had a solid grasp of all the practical principles of forestry, and was a fine example of that class of unsung heroes so aptly named 'public servants'. In response to an application by sawmiller James Emery for a site at Mount Cole in 1925, Bailes rose to the defence of his forests in an impassioned letter to A. V. Galbraith, a newly appointed member of the three-man Forests Commission of Victoria. This letter amply demonstrates some of the conflicts between conservation and utilisation at the level of an early twentieth century forester in the field:

*Arriving here in '99, I was inexperienced in the millers' ways and recommended areas containing a high percentage of large mature timbers, termed 'culls', left standing by previous millers and splitters, believing the majority would be felled and worked-up, but I was not long in learning that the cull timber was only an excuse for entry and that it was mainly the young growing immature trees (handy log size) of 2ft. and barely 2 ft. diameter, that was chiefly operated on, with barrel of 60 ft. and 80 ft. in length, of which up to 20 and 25 ft. was removed to the mill and worked up. In consequence I obtained a rise of 6 inches (though I asked for 12 inches) in the legal cutting diameter (a big thing in those days) as the [Forests] branch was at the mercy of every politician and with neither a soul to be hanged or a body to be kicked, with the result that today stands, I believe, one of the finest reproduced [sic] young forests in the state.*

*The applicant [Emery] was one of the millers in those days, and not by a long chalk has that tendency left him; as long as such unmatured well-advanced pile trees (which are again looking up in the reserve) are dotted throughout, so will he have that tendency to become established. Emery has been notified more than once that the main portion of the Mount Cole State Forest west of the Raglan Road is closed against milling. On the area now applied for within the Marney's [sic] improved belt,*

*and after repeated caution, Emery's men felled a number of splendid messmate pile trees about 20 inches in diameter and of over 60 ft. of clean straight barrels, which I found in his log yard converted into 20 and 25 ft. lengths (butts of trees only). This occurred in 1905 with the result that he was refused a further licence. On account of the scarcity of timber he set up a mill in Long Gully on the south fall of Landsborough Hill, Tchirree State Forest.*

*The growth of timber trees in the Mount Cole Reserve is somewhat different to that of the Pyrenees and other similar forests, resembling much after that of the Wombat in the vicinity of Sardine Creek. The growth is quicker and reaches much higher diameters, and even at 2 ft. 6 in. is far from matured. The cutting diameter, on a general basis, should not be less than 3 ft. 6 in., but this would, if adopted, mean a much longer wait. I consider a general fixture to meet any necessary requirements should be 3 ft. diameter 2 ft. from the surface of the ground. There appears to be a dearth of timber supplies about Beaufort, supplies coming from Gembrook and I believe Cape Otway. I ascertained from one of the firm of the main timber yards here, the reason why his supply or requirements were not obtained from Emery. The reply he gave me was 'They gave one order and one only, and that when supplied was found, after being in the yard for a short time, would turn round and look at you, and that lengths of up to 16 ft. only could be obtained, whereas the Gembrook messmate timber was cut from matured trees and supplied in 20 and 25 ft. lengths'.*

*There is no area within the Mount Cole reserve to suit Mr. Emery's requires [sic], but at Mount Lonarch, adjoining his present logging area to the north, and with a spur between, known as the School Ridge, there is a logging area which was reserved for him. Holloway of Avoca, and another miller, lodged applications for this area but were refused on the grounds that there was not sufficient timber for other than the established millers. This area is the only remaining portion of the east fall of Mount Lonarch not cut over, and contains some 100,000 super feet. ... Emery's plea is that it [the area] would not pay him as the face and grades are too steep to shift.*

*There is a logging area within the Mount Mistake Forest, parish of Colvinsby, where approximately at least 500,000 super feet, chiefly millable messmate is obtainable, chiefly near the summit on the east fall, and which would require a fair amount of haulage by wire rope. James Emery's plea is that it is too costly - and the loading station lies within*

*[just] five miles (two for choice – Buangor or Dabris) on the main line!*

*Presuming there was sufficient matured milling timber on the site applied for to warrant a mill being established there, there is the fact that the position of operations is situated in the north west portion of the reserve, the most dangerous corner as far as fire is concerned. Once fire started in the locality, it would sweep up the semi-circle of [the] range, travelling through belts of young timber in pile, spar and pole stage and over table land, before anything like a check could be made. Fires in the past have burnt up the lighter debris and charred the heavier debris of bygone milling days; at present damage has been reduced to normal.*

*No privately-owned sawmill should ever again be permitted within the boundary of the reserve. Trees should be felled and converted into logs by our own [Forests Commission] men and sold 'in the round' for removal outside the reserve, or to a State Mill when the time is ripe.*

*At present there appears to be no real scarcity of timber. Supplies come locally or from other parts. Mount Cole Reserve should be held in reserve to meet the growing demands and needs in the near future of the northern and north western plains. The time is too early for opening up the reserve. What matured trees are standing there will not deteriorate to any great extent for the waiting. Fire is the only dread and in the meantime surveying of the area into blocks and a working plan set out with a permanent system of fire precaution should be carried out. The present ruling rate (royalty) charged for timber in this district is too low. Emery started in the Lonarch practically on his uppers, and I feel sure he will have no just cause for want in his declining days. He has no son to follow in his footsteps as a miller. The refusing of the sight [sic] will not inflict undue hardship. Please find sketch herewith showing rough position of area and locality in question. Yours obediently, T. D. Bailes, Beaufort August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1925.*

Tom Bailes got his wish. The Mount Cole reserve remained closed to sawmilling, especially to the 'wretched tinpot spot mills' Bailes so despised. The Forests Commission used Emery as a mobile scavenging machine, limiting him to areas of over-mature forest around the fringes of the reserve and sending him broke in the process. When most of the mature Ash forests in Victoria were devastated by the 1939 bushfires, Mount Cole remained a green oasis and was one of the few sources of clean, green timber for some years. As Bailes predicted, once the

reserve was re-opened after the Second World War, logs were removed to mills in Beaufort and Ararat, leaving Mount Cole as an archaeological time capsule of 19<sup>th</sup> century sawmilling. After his retirement, Tom Bailes remained in Beaufort until 1950. He died the following year at the age of eighty and is buried in the Preston Cemetery, Melbourne.

Sources: VPRS 11563 unit 96 file 33/0109, VPRS 11563 unit 203 file 40/0951), Allender, T. and Brennan, D. (1996) *Coaches called here - a history of Buangor and surrounding districts*, Buangor History Committee.



**Above:** one of the "wretched tin-pot spot mills" so despised by Bailes – Forbes & Lewin at Mount Cole in the late nineteenth century. Photograph courtesy Bronwyn Shalders, Peter Evans collection.

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### **RUSSELL GRIMWADE**

Fintan O'Laighin's interesting article on the Russell Grimwade Prize in the AFHS Newsletter in December 2005 sent me rummaging through my Grimwade file – material accumulated, several years ago, when I was preparing an entry on Russell Grimwade for *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*. I was looking for further botanical and forestry clues.

I share Fintan's regret about the taxonomic fate of the Western Australian orchid which the orchidologist, William Henry Nicholls, named *Prasophyllum grimwadeanum* in Russell Grimwade's honour. Using a specimen Nicholls



collected in October 1946 on 'Sand ridges in very heavy scrub at Middleton's Beach, near Albany' Nicholls named 'this most gaily-coloured of all the *Prasophyllums*' *P. grimwadeanum* in *The Victorian Naturalist* in January 1948, recording that 'I have named this attractively-coloured species in honour of Mr. W. Russell Grimwade of Melbourne; his keen interest and ready help have very considerably advanced the study of Australian orchids, and the writer owes a debt of personal gratitude to this kindly benefactor.' Nicholls mentions three allied species of *Prasophyllum* but not Lindley's earlier-named *Prasophyllum giganteum*. This is somewhat surprising given that, as Fintan points out, *P. grimwadeanum* is now a taxonomic synonym of *P. giganteum*.

You might be interested in another Grimwade link with Western Australia - an expedition undertaken between Nicholls' collection and naming of *P. grimwadeum*. Grimwade financed and organized a scientific expedition, mainly of biologists, in the winter of 1947 - a sixteen-day bus trip westwards from Port Lincoln to Perth. In his biography, *Russell Grimwade*, John Poynter wrote [p 290] that, having often explored Western Australia's 'remarkable forests when his friend C. Lane Poole was their Conservator', Grimwade 'now planned a more systematic inspection, deciding to follow the track of the explorer Eyre across the desolate Nullabor [sic] Plain'. The 1947 **Russell Grimwade Expedition** included the naturalist, Philip Crosbie Morrison, as photographer, the botanist, James Hamlyn Willis, and the forester, Charles Edward Lane Poole. Nine hundred botanical specimens were collected for Victoria's National Herbarium, and Expedition reports were published in the *Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria* in 1951. The Expedition included Albany but, in his botanical report, Jim Willis remarked that, along that part of the coast, the season was not a good one for orchids. The only species of *Prasophyllum* included in Willis' plant list are *P. elatum* and *P. fimbria*.

Fintan's article reminded me (having forgotten Poynter's mention of it) that the Western Australian saw-milling settlement of East Kirup, south-east of Bunbury, was renamed Grimwade in 1949, and I wondered whether the 1947 Expedition passed through or near it. The small map, in Grimwade's brief introduction to the Expedition in *Memoirs of the National Museum* (1951), shows that the Expedition drove from Pemberton to Bunbury, presumably passing through Kirup. In his botanical report Willis mentioned the destruction of Karri forests near Pemberton: 'Mile after mile in the Warren River district one is depressed by the sight

of gaunt ringbarked trees, burnt-out country and abandoned selections'; and recorded that 'No collecting was done over the 100 miles between Pemberton and Bunbury'. As Fintan notes, the renaming of East Kirup was suggested by the forester who was the first Russell Grimwade Scholar, Theodore Norman Stoate. Having been Assistant Conservator of Forests in Western Australia when he held the Russell Grimwade Prize in 1930, and Deputy Conservator during Kessell's war-time secondment, Stoate succeeded Kessell as Conservator in 1946, the year before the Russell Grimwade Expedition. So I can't help wondering whether the Expedition (and possibly Lane Poole's participation in it) somehow helped shape Stoate's idea to have East Kirup renamed Grimwade soon after the Expedition.

Russell Grimwade was a founder-member of the Empire Forestry Association in 1921, and worked with Lane Poole to establish the Australian Forestry School (AFS) in Canberra to train forestry graduates. As Fintan points out, he also endowed the Russell Grimwade Scholarship for post-graduate studies at the Imperial Forestry Institute at the University of Oxford - in time for AFS graduates. Meanwhile he opposed the establishment of a forestry course at the University of Melbourne. This would not have endeared him to the Forests Commission of Victoria, which for decades to come would send its top Creswick students to gain degrees at the University of Melbourne.

Grimwade's eucalypt-rich arboretum in the grounds of his Toorak residence, 'Miegunyah', was emblematic of his interest in Australian forestry and the cultivation and use of Australian trees. He claimed that no genus could compare with *Eucalyptus* for hardwoods and cabinet timbers, and made an intricate cabinet from Australian timbers for his extensive collection of eucalypt fruit capsules. This is now in the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne. Grimwade's *An Anthography of the Eucalypts* (1920), illustrated with his own photographs, was 'to assist in the identification of species, to stimulate research, and to promote cultivation of the Eucalypts', and Lane Poole approvingly reviewed the enlarged 1930 edition.

Grimwade campaigned tirelessly for forest conservation. A member and sometime president of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Forest League, he contributed money and articles (as 'Operculum') to its journal, *The Gum Tree*, during the campaign to establish the Forests Commission of

Victoria in 1919. In the 1940s he was a leading spokesman for the Save the Forests campaign.

Grimwade's obituary in the *Empire Forestry Review* in March 1956 includes Lane Poole's appreciation: 'Foresters of Australia mourn the loss of Sir Russell. He was undoubtedly the best friend they ever had of the forests and therefore of the forester. He was unique among the population in supporting one fundamental principle of forestry, *sustained yield*.'

I agree with Fintan that Russell Grimwade's contributions to Australian forestry deserve some serious scholarship.

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### Dr. DAVID HUNGERFORD ASHTON Mountain Ash Man

6 July 1927 to 22 November 2005

As the forest-conscious author, Arundhati Roy, might have observed, in November 2005 a hole appeared in the universe in the shape of a remarkable ecologist – Dr. David Ashton. Perhaps arcanelly guided by his own name, Dr. **Ashton** was **the** authority on the world's tallest flowering tree, the mighty Mountain Ash, *Eucalyptus regnans*. His ecological interests spanned nearly six decades and numerous ecosystems. Forests loomed large in his ecological mind, including their community dynamics, nutrient cycling, epiphytes, soil mycorrhiza, pathogens, drought and fire.

David Ashton began studying at the University of Melbourne in 1946. In our conversations not long before he died, he still remembered his first-year botany excursion to forests in the Dandenong Ranges and his pleasure at being in Professor John Turner's group. He also remembered his third-year ecology excursion to east Gippsland forests in 1948. David's ecology lecturer, Dr. Reuben Patton, had a particular appreciation of forests. In the 1920s Patton had gained two forestry-underpinned qualifications - a Harvard masters degree in forestry and a Melbourne DSc degree for his thesis, 'The factors controlling the distribution of trees in Victoria', and seven published papers on trees and timber. With help from local foresters, Dr. Patton introduced David's class to forests in the vicinity of Cann River. The class included two post-Creswick forestry students, Alfred Leslie and Alan Threader – names well-known in Victorian forestry circles.

The following year Professor Turner handed David an ecological puzzle for his postgraduate research project. Mosaics of fire-generated, even-aged stands of Mountain Ash did not seem to fit the current forest regeneration model, which originated in the northern hemisphere, where uneven-aged temperate forests were perpetuated by continuous regeneration in forest gaps. It was well-known that Australia's *Eucalyptus regnans* regenerated vigorously after fire; but could it regenerate in forest gaps? Or was the dramatic episodic disturber, fire, essential for its regeneration?

Venerable stands of *E. regnans* - over two centuries old – towered above the understorey in Melbourne's water catchment on the Great Dividing Range north of the thirsty city. David could describe this Big Ash forest in the Wallaby Creek catchment and investigate regeneration in these long-unburnt stands – a tall order indeed. In 1949, with help from the University of Melbourne's new forestry lecturer, John Chinner, David began the difficult and arduous task of mapping the vegetation and soils of the Big Ash forest. Little did young David realise that this was the beginning of his half-century solo investigation of the majestic *E. regnans* and its forests.

Despite weather-, wombat- and leech-induced tribulations, David managed to reveal many details of the Mountain Ash's life-story; and in 1957 was awarded a PhD degree for his thesis, 'Studies on the autecology of *Eucalyptus regnans* F.v.M.', which showed that it could apparently regenerate in a forest gap.

His investigations reveal the crucial importance of long-term studies, with decades, not years, being required for the elucidation of adequate ecological explanations. Had Dr. Ashton transferred his ecological attention away from the Big Ash forest in the mid-1950s, he would not have noticed the subsequent demise of the few saplings that had managed to grow from seedlings in a forest gap. Consequently he would not have been provoked to ask further questions and examine in more detail the biology and ecology of *E. regnans* in order to properly explain the intimate intricacies of its life and what Tom Griffiths has called its 'Faustian bargain with fire'.

While continuing his own *E. regnans* research, Dr. Ashton interested generations of Melbourne University students in ecological processes in Victoria's diverse ecosystems. From the 1960s he taught science and forestry undergraduates ecology, and supervised postgraduate ecological projects. His undergraduate ecology excursions and postgraduate research projects often focussed on forests or

woodlands. His annual week-long ecology excursions included sub-alpine snow gum woodlands at Lake Mountain, a coastal warm temperate rainforest near Marlo in east Gippsland, and the cypress pine - white box woodland in the rain-shadowed part of the Snowy River valley near Suggan Buggan in eastern Victoria.

Ashton's first postgraduate student, Malcolm Gill, studied forests near Wallaby Creek – messmate forests near Kinglake West - and gained a PhD degree for his thesis, 'The ecology of mixed-species forests of *Eucalyptus* in central Victoria'. Ashton also supervised research projects on Messmate, *Eucalyptus obliqua*, and Lilly Pilly, *Acmena smithii*, communities on Wilsons Promontory, *Nothofagus cunninghamii* on Mt Donna Buang, and the intriguing outlier of Bull Mallee, *Eucalyptus behriana*, near Melton, not far from Melbourne. Snow gum and cypress pine woodland postgraduate projects were prompted by data collected during undergraduate ecology excursions. With funding from the Forests Commission of Victoria, Evan Chesterfield, a post-Creswick forester, described the botanically complex landscape of the catchment of the Macalister River in Gippsland for his MScF degree.

I suppose it is not surprising that eucalypt communities dominated Ashton's ecological investigations – from Mountain Ash forests and snow gum woodlands to remnant eucalypt woodlands near Ocean Grove and on the Mornington Peninsula. Under Ashton's supervision in the 1970s, Pauline Ladiges, now head of the Botany School, undertook a population study of *Eucalyptus viminalis* for her MSc degree and then further research for her PhD thesis, 'Studies of population differentiation in *Eucalyptus viminalis* Labill. in relation to mineral nutrition and drought resistance'.

Retirement in 1989 did not stop his ecological work. In 1999, the first of three substantial papers on his half-century's scientific scrutiny of Mountain Ash appeared in *Australian Forestry* - a paper written with John Chinner, 'Problems of regeneration of the mature *Eucalyptus regnans* F. Muell., (The Big Ash) forest, in the absence of fire at Wallaby Creek, Victoria, Australia'.

In 1990 Dr. Ashton was awarded the prestigious Medal of the Ecological Society of Australia, and in 1999 he was doubly honoured. Rangers at the Kinglake National Park, which then included the Big Ash forest, organised a celebration for the forest ecologist's research jubilee, and a beautiful bronze commemorative plaque was unveiled at Wallaby Creek. Since this is still part of Melbourne's water catchment and therefore not accessible to the public,

the plaque was erected by the Toorourrong Reservoir car park, in sight of the forests David Ashton knew so well. In 1999 the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment established the David Ashton Biodiversity Award for departmental staff for scientific achievements which enhance the understanding, conservation or management of Victoria's biodiversity. In 2001 he was awarded a medal of the Order of Australia for services to plant science, and in 2002 a University of Melbourne DSc degree for his published work.

As an artist, poet, pianist and composer as well as ecologist, David Ashton valued the beauty as well as the science of forests. He is outlived by forests which he and his students investigated; by his published papers, which provide foundations for informed conservation and management decisions; by the ideas and practices of his postgraduate students in CSIRO, national parks and forestry, universities and schools; and the David Ashton Biodiversity Award to encourage the conservation of Victoria's biodiversity.

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## JOHN BANKS' WOLLEMI PINE

An earlier issue of the AFHS newsletter carried an obituary to John Banks who died suddenly on 22 March 2004. John is remembered by many people for his forestry related activities, one of the most notable being his long and distinguished involvement with the Australian National University where he studied and taught tree taxonomy, urban treescapes and dendrochronology.

To commemorate the second anniversary of his passing, a ceremony was held on a beautiful day, in the courtyard named after him and adjacent to the Forestry building where he worked for so many years. The courtyard is culturally significant for two reasons; it contains trees that were selected by John for both their teaching value and their beauty and it is the venue for staff and students from the School of Resources, Environment and Society to have regular, weekly morning teas.

The ceremony involved the planting of a tree, but this was no ordinary tree. It was a fine specimen of the Wollemi Pine, the 'dinosaur' tree that attracted so much attention after its accidental discovery in the Blue Mountains around a decade ago. John was working on the species just prior to his death and his expertise on tree ring dating was used to age the

natural population. A Queensland business has been propagating the species to allow people to enjoy it without extracting specimens from the wild and acknowledged John's contribution by naming one of the parent trees after him.

So, the tree in the John Banks courtyard, safe inside its sturdy cage, is the Wollemi Pine *var. 'John Banks'*. The specimen was bid for at a Sotheby's auction with donations from current and former staff and students and colleagues of John's. The bidder was Andrew Carter, ANU alumnus and one of John's former students. Fittingly, the planting occurred on World Forestry Day, a day that recognises the contribution forests and forestry make to the society and the environment.

John's wife Margaret and his daughter Lynette attended the ceremony together with Vice Chancellor Ian Chubb, with Head of SRES Peter Kanowski as the master of ceremonies. The photograph shows Lynette doing the planting, in an appropriately regal sense, using the silver spade kept especially for such occasions.

I met John only once, soon after I started my PhD. We had a brief but wide ranging discussion in the tearoom about fire and he passed away the following week, making that brief encounter all the more precious to me.



Photograph courtesy D. Claridge, SRES, ANU.

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## **TIMBER ROADS IN THE BUSH**

The current network of sealed roads in the Otway Ranges, particularly east west along the ridge and north south to Apollo Bay and Colac, makes for easy motoring but in days gone by these same road routes were the cause of much trouble and strife.

The carting of timber on roads in the Otways from 1900 led to severe wear and tear on the earth formed and corduroy running surfaces, particularly in winter months, and the Colac Shire, and its southern successor from 1919, the Otway Shire, had a policy of banning the movement of timber wagons and trucks from May to October each year. A special permit was required for movements during the banned months and these were not lightly given.

By the late 1920s the main trunk roads in the Otways were formed and gravelled and there was even tar sealed pavements in some areas, but by today's standards the roads were narrow, inadequately drained and poorly graded. The side roads were a mix of earth formed, corduroy and gravel and this infrastructure endured into the war years.

Unique amongst local governments in Victoria, the Otway Shire from 1942 exercised a provision in the Local Government Act to levy a charge against sawmillers and timber carters for road damage. The levy was based on the number of super feet loaded onto the vehicle (to a limit of so many tons) multiplied by the distance travelled. In return for paying the levy sawmillers and timber carters were granted permits to cart on certain roads for so many months per year and could apply for a permit for cartage during winter but this was rarely given.

The timing of the charge seems to have been related to the huge increase in timber carting occasioned by salvage operation after the 1939 bushfire and consequent damage to road surfaces all along the Ridge and down the side roads and tracks. In the aftermath of the bushfire there was a ready market in paper-making for scorched sapling and spar mountain ash billets. By mid 1940 there were 30 contractors and 300 men engaged in cutting and carting 4-ft 1-in and 6-ft 1-in billets to the railway stations at Dinmont, Beech Forest, Ferguson. Weeaprounah, Wyelangta, Stalker and Lavers Hill.

The tonnages were huge. At Beech Forest over 20,000 tons was delivered in 1940-1941, with over 4,000 tons at Ferguson and Lavers Hill, over 2,000 tons at Weeaprounah and almost the same amount at Wyelangta. There were four trains day being run from Colac to Beech Forest and the Railways stationed a train crew and porter at Beech Forest to



handle the traffic. The trade boomed while it lasted and tailed off completely by 1943.

The Otway Shire Council reaffirmed its road damage levy after this and it became routine practice. The post war building boom saw new forest areas opened for cutting and the eventual establishment of Gellibrand as a major sawmilling centre and this meant long distance carting logs from the Ridge to Gellibrand and the dispatch of the sawn timber north to Colac over the main road. The wear and tear on the roads was significant. For example, at one time in response to a sawmiller query the Shire Engineer dipped the gravel surface along the entire length of Denherts Track, where 2.5 million super feet was being transited per year, and found the average depth of gravel was 4 or so inches on the north end and 1.5 inches on the bottom section just five years after the road was resurfaced with 6 inches of gravel.

Objection to the road damage levy and the load limit weights was raised from time to time by the Victorian Sawmillers Association and the Forests Commission, but the Shire stood firm. It had no choice as neither the Forests Commission nor the timber industry was voluntarily contributing maintenance funds for road works and as approximately one third of the Shire was Crown Land and not subject to rates, the Shire had a restricted revenue base compared to other municipalities.

The Shire set the axle load limit at 5 tons on gravel roads and would consider 8 tons axle load on sealed roads to a maximum gross weight of 13 tons, but there were not many sealed roads in the Shire. These axle and load limits determined the maximum payload to be somewhere between 3,000 to 3,200 super feet and several sawmillers contended this was uneconomic. The Shire ignored these bleats.

By the late 1950s and into the 1960s the improvements in technology enabled sawmillers to cut their yearly quota in a few months over summer, but there was neither the stacking space at the mills nor trucking capacity to handle the logs in the same time frame and this meant logs now began to be carted in large volumes over the gravel roads in the winter months when the sub surface was wet and damp. Road surfaces, even gravel ones, began to crumble under this pounding.

The Shire responded by intervening on a case by case basis and required individual sawmillers to enter into supplementary agreements that included arrangements such as being directly billed for specific instances of remediation (drain and culvert damage for instance) caused by log traffic and others

for wear and tear above the normal, coupled with a ban on carting on rainy days. Some sawmillers were asked to lodge a money guarantee with the Shire to cover future works. Sawmillers who were regarded as causing casual damage beyond normal wear and tear in specific instances, such as tracking bulldozers along public roads or over loading on a load limited track, were billed for repairs and occasionally had the load limits reduced as a precaution.

By the early 1970s the standard of roads in the Shire had risen and the considerably increased lengths of reconstructed and sealed pavements allowed for axle loadings to be raised on the trunk roads and the issue of road damage ceased to be a major issue. Another reason was that the volume of timber was much less, being under 100,000 tonnes compared to the 200,000 to 250,000 tonnes in the 1950s.

The Shire continued with the permit regime and occasionally refused to sanction cartage on soft roads or roads considered substandard as well as billing timber companies for repairs to road damages caused by its vehicles. In 1991 a timber company took the matter to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and lost at the hearing in 1992. The Tribunal upheld the Shire's authority to charge for road damage. In commenting on the case, a Shire spokesperson said that the Shire should be able to make timber carters contribute to road maintenance as well as pay for damage. That was the swan song for the Shire because it was amalgamated out of existence soon after, leaving unfinished the road problem nearly a century old.

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**Above:** 'One stick too many' – an overloaded timber truck at Feiglin's No.1 Acheron Valley mill (Victoria) in the 1940s. Photo: Sam Feiglin, Peter Evans collection.



## BOOK REVIEW

### **Tree Climber: The Education of a Forester** **By Roger Underwood** **York Publishing (ISBN 0 646 425323)**

If you are a person who grew up in the 40s or 50s, or a forester who managed forests for the past fifty years, or just someone who likes a well-written yarn, this is a book for you.

The eighteen stories in the book serve as an autobiography of the author, commencing with the description of a happy childhood and education in Perth, stories that will resonate with those of us who spent similar childhoods anywhere in Australia in the same period. The stories which recount details of his education as a professional forester could be the stories of many Australian Forestry School graduates although, fortunately, most of us did not need to acquire the tree-climbing skills needed in Western Australia.

Those stories which cover his working life in the small bush settlements of Western Australia are peppered with anecdotes which illustrate the life and humour of the bush workers of the post-war period, and the dedication of the foresters who managed the forests. As the author says, those days are gone and will never return, but he does not hide a certain nostalgia for them, a nostalgia shared by many elderly foresters. And, of course, many of us shared his good fortune of attractive young school teachers being appointed to country towns.

The stories also portray the development of the author as a whole person, with interests outside his profession – family, sport, music and travel – and climax with the realisation of a dream: the purchase of a block of dirt which the author and his wife can reforest with species of their own choosing.

The book is an important chronicle of the forest and social history of the south west region of Western Australia in the 1950-1980 period. I hope that the author will chronicle a similar history of the following twenty years, when a changed public attitude to the value of these forests has caused them to be 'preserved', rather than conserved and utilised, and the small timber towns to be abandoned, or turned into tourist centres.

The book is recommended without reservation.

Peter Kanowski (Snr).  
Nudgee, QLD.

## CONFERENCES

### **Trans-Tasman Forest History conference update**

The seventh conference of the Australian Forest History Society will be held in Christchurch, New Zealand from 29 January to 2 February 2007. We plan for one session in relation to the eightieth anniversary of the New Zealand Institute of Forestry, while another will look at indigenous people and the forest. Many papers will look beyond New Zealand to Australia and elsewhere, and some papers will look beyond New Zealand to other environmental histories. In addition to two field outings during the conference, we also plan an optional study trip to the West Coast forests from 2 to 4 February.

For further details of the conference (already announced) see the December 2005 newsletter and the AFHS website. Please e-mail all expressions of interest – the sooner the better! - to [starmulq@es.co.nz](mailto:starmulq@es.co.nz) or mail them to Paul Star/Australian Forest History Society, History Dept, University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand.



Kahikatea forest, Westland (Nancy Adams)

### **Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies**

The Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies at the University of Tasmania held its 19<sup>th</sup> annual conference on the 15 October 2005 with the title 'Desolate, howling wilderness'? Environmental history in Tasmania and beyond.

Speakers included Dr. Tom Griffiths who dealt with the breath of Antarctica blowing from the South and linkages between Tasmania and Antarctica, Senator Christine Milne on Tasmania as the crucible of

green politics, Professor Ros Haynes on the creation of the images of wilderness (plants but where is the fauna?), Grace Karskens detailed her recent work on convict-shaped concepts of 'the bush' around Sydney and the Castle Hill rebellion of 1804. After lunch Evan Rolley, the Managing Director of Forestry Tasmania outlined the role of timber in shaping the lifestyle of Tasmanians, Tim Jetson introduced the 'proto-environmentalist' Reverend H. D. Atkinson, Roger Kellaway described the management of Macquarie Island 1890-1895 and Will Mooney dealt with changing perceptions of colonial farmers to native birds. An interesting and informative set of papers on ongoing research around a broad theme.

On more specifically forest history, a paper by Will Mooney on the Plantation Homes Scheme in Tasmania 1920-1930 deals with attempts by the first head of the newly founded Forestry Department in Tasmania, Llewellyn Irby, to foster wasteland afforestation and child migration. This paper is available in volume 10 (2005) of *Tasmanian Historical Studies* titled 'Migration: making Tasmania home?'

Copies are available from: The Secretary, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, School of History and Classics, University of Tasmania, Private Bag 81, HOBART 7001. Andrew Wilson, Hobart, TAS.  
[http://www.utas.edu.au/history\\_classics/publications/pubs\\_index.html](http://www.utas.edu.au/history_classics/publications/pubs_index.html)

### **IUFRO/ Italian Academy of Forestry Science/ESEH**

Two IUFRO groups and the European Society for Environmental History are involved with this conference being arranged in the Italian Forestry School.

8-10 June 2006, 'Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Forest Management: the role of traditional knowledge', Firenze/Florence, Italy. Details:  
[http://www.forestlandscape.unifi.it/chsfm\\_2006.asp](http://www.forestlandscape.unifi.it/chsfm_2006.asp)

### **ASEH/US Forest History Society**

The American Society for Environmental History is joining with the US based Forest History Society to hold conferences in 2006 and 2007. They promise to be mega-events with some 350 people presenting papers at the 2006 meeting.

29 March - 1 April 2006, 'Rivers run through them: landscapes in environmental history', St Paul, Minnesota, USA. Details of this meeting at:  
<http://www.h-net.org/~environ/ASEH/conferences.html>

## **RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND JOURNALS**

### **News of Forest History 2005, No 35/36**

The Proceedings of the IUFRO Conference 'Woodlands-Cultural History', edited by Elisabeth Johann have now been published as *News of Forest History* No.III (36/37). They are available on the Internet at: <http://lebensministerium.at> using the search term 'news' or directly at: <http://forst.lebensministerium.at/article/articleview/41946/1/4909/>. There are 34 papers including one on 'Layered cultures of forestry' by John Dargavel, Mauro Agnoletti and Elisabeth Johann, pp. 25-33.

### **Environment and History 11(4), November 2005**

There was some fear that the international scope of this journal might narrow following its association with the European Society for Environmental History. However, this has been strictly limited to the inclusion of four pages of Society notices at the end of each issue. The journal's wide perspective is maintained by the Co-ordinating Editor, John MacKenzie, whose books on environmental history in the British Empire, and particularly on Africa will be known to many here. The current issue has articles on Tanzania, Brazil, Finland and Queensland, dealing respectively with mangrove forestry, wood industrialisation, slash and burn cultivation, and beaches. John Dargavel has been re-appointed to the Editorial Board for a further three years.

### **Environmental History 10(4), October 2005**

This is a mega, 240 page issue to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partnership between the American Society for Environmental History and the US Forest History Society. It starts with an exploratory essay by Peter Coates, 'The strange stillness of the past: toward an environmental history of sound and noise'. He talks of John Muir's comments about the sound of wind in the trees, and I am reminded of Norm Lewis' comment that he could tell the site quality of a pine plantation by its sound. The anniversary consists of short contributions on 'What books should be more widely read in environmental history' by some 40 leading figures, including Donald Hughes and Mark Elvin. Read what they all recommend, and you will be very much wiser - and very much older!

John Dargavel,  
 Florey, ACT.  
[John.Dargavel@ozemail.com.au](mailto:John.Dargavel@ozemail.com.au)



## RECENT NEW ZEALAND PUBLICATIONS

Colquhoun D., 2005. *The New Zealand Journals of Thomas Laslett, 1833-1843*. The Turnbull Library Record 38, 85-91.

Roche M., 2005. *The Missing Report: Sir David Hutchins and New Zealand*. Forestry Part II Kauri in NZ. The Turnbull Library Record 38, 35-41.

Simpson P., 2005. *Pôhutukawa & Râtâ: New Zealand's Iron Hearted Trees*. Te Papa Press, Wellington.

Mike Roche

## AFHS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Australian Forest History Society's Oral History Project which completed Stage 1 in 2001 has now completed Stage 2. All paper transcripts together with an index have been written to CD and transferred to the Queensland John Oxley Library in Brisbane, temporarily sited at Cannon Hill. Signed release forms and paper summaries accompanied the CD.

In total, 33 people intimately associated with forest management, use, research and forest conservation were interviewed on tape and their words transcribed (a massive task), proofed and vetted for libellous words or passages, as far as non-legal volunteers can do such a job.

The transcriptions included the work of numerous professions: managerial foresters, forest leaders, forest rangers, National Park officers and those in specialist work areas (surveying, cartography, plant mechanics, administrators etc). This is a huge database for forest historians, biographers, family tree enthusiasts and simply those curious enough to want to browse through the files of yesteryear. Contributors to the project were Dr. Margaret Kowald, Peter Kanowski, Peter Holzworth and his tireless transcriber wife Beverley.

Peter Holzworth,  
for Project Leader, Dr. Kowald.

## SEEKING INFORMATION

### Herbert Eric Dadswell

I am seeking information about my father, Herbert Eric Dadswell, that will enable me to prepare a substantial article for an appropriate journal. My objective is to ensure that his place in Australian

forestry and timber is formally recorded. The information I seek is aimed predominantly at Eric's professional work. Naturally however I would appreciate anything that relates to his life.

Specifically, I seek information about the following:

1. Time in Canberra at the Australian Forestry School, 1929.
2. Research activity at Forest Products in South Melbourne, 1930-1964.
3. Work with the Australian Army Forestry Corps, 1944?
4. His Chairing of a FAO Committee in Rome, 1960's?
5. His links with the Australian timber industry.
6. Lecturing conducted in Canberra, 1929, and at Creswick.

I am willing to receive information in any format. P.O. Box, 277, Warragul, VIC. 3820; fax, 03 5622 2684; telephone, 03 5622 2683.

Gordon Dadswell  
Warragul, VIC  
[gdadswell@dcsi.net.au](mailto:gdadswell@dcsi.net.au)

## Films produced by the former NSW Forestry Commission – where are they now?

*Retired NSW Forester, John Dark, is interested in the fate of films relating to the NSW Forestry Commission:*

The films I was involved with are as follows:

1. 'Forest Wealth' – four tins of tinted 35mm film.
2. 'Langley Vale' – two reels, 16mm.
3. 'Red Terror' made by a small local company. Held by the NSW Film Council - about 15mins of 16mm film.
4. 'Bush Fire Brigade' – made by A.N. Film Board – 11mins of 16mm made in 1949. Held by the NSW Film Council.

My interest in the material was to identify localities and people for future history. Each film had a file which was, upon my retirement, marked in red 'never to be destroyed'. This work was not my job but my interest, and did not appear to attract much interest from senior staff.

I originally found 'Forest Wealth' in four rusty cans in the Wood Technology safe. It was 35mm nitrate stock, projection tinted prints. I sent it to Canberra, I don't remember where, for viewing by Neil Cromer to see what it was all about. He returned it saying that it appeared to be bits of several films. I had a negative made and a 16mm projection print. I found that it had been made by Lacey Percival, one of



Australia's notable film makers for the NSW Forestry Commission and commercially screened in the early 1920s. It was a thinly disguised picture of the Commissioner of the day, and used many Commission staff. I screened it to some senior staff and was able to identify many staff and localities depicted. A young surveyor of the day symbolised Dalrymple-Hay. Others such as Les McIver's brother appeared. Included was a film shot of the Minyon Falls and a sequence showing the well-known 'Branch Log Depot' at work. (We found the location of the 'Branch' recently while wandering about the area.)

The film was screened at an Institute dinner. I cannot coherently remember much more. I suppose it was about the 1960s. I had a few interviews with Percival which I documented and left with the film material. All of this material I left with the NSW Forestry Commission or the Canberra Film Archives.

With the Langley Vale film I think two reels of 16mm nitrate were obtained from the family, one of which was found in a family garage in Melbourne was so stretched it could not be projected until copied. It was another Lacey Percival film. It recorded the field work at Langley Vale at the 1928 British Empire Forestry Conference. I had stills made at a film Company in Missenden Road, Sydney, and sent them to Max Jacobs and Hec Gray in England for identification of subjects and people. Only two people were identified, a South African Forester and old man Langley. All of this material I left with the NSW Forestry Commission and/or the Canberra Film Archives.

'Red Terror' was a good lively film about bush fire prevention. It was made in the Baradine district showing the local district forester and the Salt Caves fire lookout. It was made by a local film maker Reg ? who had an office in Jamieson Street.

The eleven-minute film 'Bush Fire Brigade' was a 16mm film made by the A. N. Film Board. A lot of it was set in the Camden area. It was much less inspiring than 'Red Terror'.

John Dark  
27 Bent Street  
Greenwich, NSW 2065  
[sao1905@yahoo.com.au](mailto:sao1905@yahoo.com.au)

#### Fintan O'Laighin comments:

These films may be available through the National Film and Sound Archive - I got responses to all four titles when I did a search of its collection, although some refer to documentation that was prepared for the film (e.g., publicity notes) or to books which

refer to them. See the advanced search function at <http://www.screensound.gov.au/cgi-bin/waxhtml.exe/olc/olcsearch.wxh?sDBCode=PR>.

#### Peter Evans adds:

Perhaps the best known of the Victorian forest history films is 'Timber', produced by Herschells Pty Ltd of Jolimont, Victoria, and sponsored by the Shell Oil Company (although the original suggestion for the film may have come from the Forests Commission of Victoria). Originally titled 'Our Forest Heritage', the draft script was submitted in June 1936 and the film had its first screening at 'The Atheneum' on 8 April 1937. (VPRS 11563 unit 141 file 36/1751).

#### A PLEA FROM THE EDITOR ...

I am very keen to hear from any members willing to be guest editors for the December 2006 issue of the newsletter and any issues after that. Feedback from past guest editors indicates it is an enjoyable and not too onerous a task, and you get the opportunity to put your own spin on forest history! Please contact me on 02 6125 3628 or email me on [sue.feary@anu.edu.au](mailto:sue.feary@anu.edu.au) if you are interested. Sue Feary, Series Editor, AFHS.

#### AFHS Membership

Membership of the Australian Forest History Society (AFHS) Inc is \$25 a year, or \$15 a year for students. For overseas addressees, it is \$30 (**in Australian currency please**). These prices do not include GST as the AFHS is not registered for paying or claiming GST. Membership expires on **30<sup>th</sup> June** each year.

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