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# Australian Forest History Society

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Newsletter No. 74  
April 2018

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



*Robert Romelli's rather ramshackle sawmill south-west of Wylangta in the West Otways in Victoria. The mill operated between 1914 and 1922 and was obviously built as cheaply as possible. The ramshackle outlet tramway in front of the mill looks equally decrepit. Clearly this was not an investment designed for longevity. From an old postcard, Peter Evans collection.*

*See article "West Otways Sawmilling - A Wonky Start" by Norm Houghton, page 6.*

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**NEXT ISSUE**

The newsletter is published three times a year and the next issue should be out in August 2018.

**Input is always welcome.**

Contributions can be sent to [Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:Fintan.OLaighin@agriculture.gov.au).

**FIRST PHOTO FROM GALLIPOLI**

An unusual photograph for a forest history newsletter, but when looking for a photograph of Robert Blackwood Steele to accompany Michael Roche's page 3 article on *The "Third Man" of the New Zealand State Forest Service*, we came across this photograph on the Auckland Libraries website, "Heritage et AL". The accompanying article says that "it is considered the first newspaper image of the Gallipoli campaign and is attributed to Private Robert Blackwood Steele of the Auckland Infantry Battalion". It was published in the *Auckland Weekly News Supplement* on 24th June 1915 and depicts first aid being applied to an ANZAC soldier on the sloping terrain of Gaba Tepe on the Gallipoli Peninsula on 25th April 1915.



For more information, see <http://heritageet.al.blogspot.com.au/2015/06/first-photograph-from-gallipoli.html> and [ww100.govt.nz/the-first-glimpse-of-gallipoli](http://ww100.govt.nz/the-first-glimpse-of-gallipoli).

## THE "THIRD MAN" OF THE NEW ZEALAND STATE FOREST SERVICE

By Michael Roche

Three men who had served in the New Zealand Division in WWI and were awarded government scholarships in 1919 to study forestry at Edinburgh secured positions in the newly formed New Zealand State Forest Service in 1922. In 1919 there was only a small Forestry Branch of the Lands Department concerned entirely with exotic afforestation, although the Royal Commission on Forestry of 1913 had recommended a separate department and the appointment of professionally qualified foresters, so there was the acceptance of an element of risk in retraining for a job that might not be there on their return in three years' time. Two of the men, Cecil McLean (always "C.M.") Smith and Frank Foster, ultimately held senior positions in the State Forest Service and its successor the New Zealand Forest Service. Frank Foster retired in 1963 as Inspector in Charge of the Management Division, a position he had held since 1946, having been an acting Conservator of Forests as early as 1928. He was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters (now the New Zealand Institute of Forestry) in 1927 and its first Secretary. C.M. Smith, another inaugural member of the institute, served as Chief Inspector of Forests from 1930 to 1950 when he departed to head the Botany Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.



The "third man" was Robert Blackwood Steele (pictured in the uniform of the Auckland Infantry Battalion). Unlike Foster and Smith, he was not accorded an obituary in the *New Zealand Journal of Forestry* and remains a somewhat shadowy figure in New Zealand's forest history.

Steele was born in 1890 to Alexander and Mary (nee Ballantyne) Steele, the third child and oldest son in a family of six. The son of an Auckland iron monger, in 1903 he passed the civil service exam and, by 1908, was registered as a school teacher. He taught at various schools in the Auckland region before enlisting in 1914.

Steele left with the main body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in October 1914. He served at Gallipoli and on the Western Front as a Lieutenant in the Machine Gun Company. After the war he spent three and a half years at Edinburgh University where he studied agriculture and forestry. C.M. also served in the Machine Gun Company, ending the war as a Temporary Captain; in addition both men were school teachers before enlisting, so they may have jointly discussed the scholarship opportunities and possibilities for forestry. Steele completed his studies with a three month tour of forests in France along with a week looking at protection forests in Switzerland. He was interviewed by the *Christchurch Press* on his return to New Zealand where he lamented the parlous state of forestry in Britain where the Geddes Commission had made serious cutbacks to the British Forestry Commission. He contrasted this to

250 years of forest management in France and Germany. He spoke briefly about his tour of French forests observing that the "French Forestry Service was really a quasi-military organisation". The Edinburgh course he rated with Oxford as the two best in Britain, ahead of Aberdeen and Bangor.

In 1922 Steele joined the newly formed State Forest Service as a Forest Ranger and, by 1925, was appointed as a Forest Assistant. In 1926 Steele was part of a Trans-Tasman staff exchange initiated by L.M. Ellis, the New Zealand Director of Forests, after a visit to Australia. S.F. Rust and W.H. Horne came to New Zealand and R.B. Steele and F.J. Perham spent six months with the Forests Commission of Victoria. From this visit, Steele authored in 1927 *A Report on forestry in Victoria; with Special Reference to the Victorian eucalyptus, their suitability and value for forestation operations in New Zealand*.

In early 1928 he resigned his position to take up a vacancy with the Department of Agriculture in Tasmania. The move did not, however, prevent him from becoming one of the inaugural members of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters. Some colleagues considered that he had taken the job in Tasmania after his application for a Conservator's position was unsuccessful and went to a forest officer without professional qualifications. In New Zealand Steele disappears from sight.

This, however, is not the end of the story, for in 1931 after just over three years working as the Southern District Agricultural Organiser for the Department of Agriculture in Tasmania, Steele abruptly resigned to become a farm manager on one of Sir George Richardson's properties. Richardson was the proprietor of the Tasmanian Milk Company. Steele's departure from the Department of Agriculture was lamented in the *Burnie Advocate*, particularly for his work on tobacco growing. Steele was reported in the *Mercury* as saying he had enjoyed his work in the department but with no prospects of promotion for some time he had decided to go into the private sector. In 1931 Steele also resigned his membership of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters - whether as an economy measure in the depression or because he was striking out in a new direction is uncertain.

Steele can be traced to Sorrell in 1935 in the Tasmanian Post Office Directory but, by 1936, appears to have returned to New Zealand to live at Franklin, south of Auckland, with his wife Anabel Jean where he was engaged in farming. In 1940 he was called up into the reserves as Lieutenant. After the war he changed career again becoming an Agricultural Instructor at Hobson, then on the northern rural fringes of Auckland. He retired to Kaikohe in Northland in 1969 and died in 1977. He never seems to have rekindled his connections with forestry in New Zealand.

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*Note: The photograph accompanying this article is taken from the Auckland Libraries website, "Heritage et AL" <http://heritageet.al.blogspot.com.au/2015/06/first-photograph-from-gallipoli.html>.*

## OWEN JONES: INAUGURAL CHAIR OF THE FORESTS COMMISSION OF VICTORIA, 1919-1925

By Michael Roche

In 1925, after five challenging years, Owen Jones resigned his position as Chair of the Forests Commission of Victoria to join New Zealand Perpetual Forests, a leading New Zealand afforestation company as its Forestry Superintendent. Included in Jones' resignation file held at the Public Record Office Victoria in Melbourne is his original handwritten application for the post. This is reproduced below along with some notes and commentary.

3 Feb 1919

The Hon. The Minister of Mines & Forests, Victoria

Sir, with reference to your advertisement in the London Times of to-day's date inviting applications for the post of chairman of the forestry commission, I have the honour to submit my name as a candidate.

I was nominated as a probationer for the Indian and Ceylon Forest Service in 1908. The course prescribed consisted of two years theoretical study at Oxford University, combined with weekly excursions to various forest areas in England and a three weeks' silvicultural tour of France followed by nine months of practical work in Germany and Switzerland. At the end of this course, in September 1911, I took my Forestry Diploma at Oxford, passing second out of thirty candidates, & was appointed to the Ceylon Service as an Assistant Conservator.

In the meantime, in 1910, I had also taken an Honours Degree (B.A) at Oxford in Natural Science.

The Ceylon government then deported me to go to Germany for a second year to specialise in the preparation of Forest Working Plans.

During my first year in Germany I had studied the systems in vogue in Hesse, in the Schwald [Sihlwald?] (Switzerland) and the Black Forest; in this second year I studied those of Prussia, Bavaria & Saxony and also spent 2½ months at the Prussian Forest Statistical Bureau at Eberswalde [1] under Professor Dr Schwappach [2], and worked in the field with Working Plans parties in Saxony and Poland. On returning to England I further spent some time in the Buckinghamshire beech woods with Mr Hobart-Hampton, formerly principal of the Indian College at Dehra Dun [3].

My training was thus unusually thorough & complete.

Towards the end of 1912 I went out to Ceylon & after three months at the Head Office in Kandy was given charge of a Division. As Divisional Officer I had charge at different times of the Eastern, North-Western, Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa & Western Provinces and also for a time as Special Officer to draw a report on the hill country fuel areas, for which I received the thanks of the Conservator.

For the last eighteen months of my time in Ceylon I was in charge of the important Ratnapura Division, comprising the Sabaragamuwa & Western Provinces, with 11 officers including the Central Timber Depot, Colombo, & a staff of 50 native subordinates.

I thus had experience of both hill & low country, both wet & dry zones.

On the outbreak of war I offered my services for the front, but was refused permission by Government. Several subsequent applications

were met with a similar refusal, but at last in February 1917 I succeeded in obtaining permission to come home. I joined the R.F.C. obtaining a Commission in August 1917 after serving overseas as a pilot with the Independent Air Force [4] & being wounded at present stationed at Cranwell as a flying instructor & now expect before long to be demobilised.

I am 32 years of age of sound constitution and in good health I possess initiative and energy & am not afraid of hard work.

It is open to me to return to the Ceylon Service, but I make this application because I naturally wish if possible to better my position and because I am eager to find employment in a "white man's country" where I can settle down and make a permanent home.

For convenience of reference I append a summary of my particulars on a separate sheet & will also give a permanent English address.

I hope that my application will receive favourable consideration and I would urge in support of it my experience considerable and varied, & that my training was exceptionally thorough.

I am sir, your obedient servant

Owen Jones

Lt R.A.F.

### Notes

1. The Prussian Forest Statistical Bureau at Eberswalde can trace its origins back to the Royal Prussian Higher Forestry College established in 1830.
2. Professor Dr Adam Schwappach completed a PhD in forestry at Munich. He held several forest research and academic positions before being appointed to Eberwalde in 1886 and was an important figure in German forestry in the decades around the turn of the 20th century.
3. The Dehra Dun Forest School opened in 1878 and subsequently became the Imperial Forestry Research Institute in 1906 and later the Forestry Research Institute.
4. The Independent Air Force was a bomber group that operated in the latter part of World War I separate from the British army or navy. Jones was an early advocate for the value of aerial photography in forestry and of aeroplanes for fire-fighting. See O. Jones, *The possibilities of Aerial Photographic surveys for forest purposes* presented at the Premiers' conference in Melbourne in 1920. In New Zealand in 1937, Jones used a plane to search for the seat of fires and direct fire-fighting efforts in New Zealand Perpetual Forests plantations.

### Commentary

Jones' application supports his claim that he was well trained with a considerable range of experience prior to taking up his responsibilities as chair of the Forests Commission of Victoria. His letter of application provides an excellent cameo of the Oxford forester of the period. These features were not what particularly grabbed my attention when reading his application, rather it was that he had noticed the advertisement in *The Times* and applied the same day. The contrast with the filling of the Director of Forests position in New Zealand in 1919 was marked; here many of the serious candidates among the 30 or so applicants provided professionally printed CVs along with letters of recommendation.

Jones was appointed on 24 June 1919 with the offer being cabled to London the next day. No response was forthcoming and, on 17 July, a follow up cable (costing 6/6d) was sent to solicit a reply and prospective arrival date. The Agent General's reply from London indicated that Jones had been informed on Thursday 26 June that his application was successful, and implying his acceptance spoke of the difficulties of securing a passage after demobilisation of the IAF. To try and speed things up, Jones initially endeavoured to organise his passage through the Repatriation Department of the Air Ministry.

The mention of wanting to "settle down and make a permanent home" in Australia was "shorthand" for other events in Jones' life. On 4 July 1919, a week and a day after receiving notification that his position was his, he married Elsie Veronica Farmer in London. He may have been engaged at the time of making his application.

Lieutenant General Monash was confidentially approached to hold back some Australian officers to make space for Jones. On 3 October, Jones was booked to leave on *Morea*, but its sailing was delayed by strike action, and the vessel did not depart until 20 October. *Morea* arrived in Melbourne on 28 November. On the passenger list Jones was recorded as "Capt" (the army equivalent of his RFC rank) and accompanied by Mrs Jones. His marriage puts his desire not to return to the Ceylon Forest Service into context, similar to Lane Poole in Western Australia, the Victorian Forests Commission post meant that they could live together in, if not in Britain, then in one of the "little Britains". This is perhaps what Jones meant by a "white man's country"; he later wrote about Māori tree planters in New Zealand in patronising terms.

The position as chair of the Forests Commission was undoubtedly a career advancement for Jones, who has been an Assistant Forester in Ceylon, albeit with experience in charge of a Division, and had only 6-7 years employment (including a year in Germany) behind him. That said, in New Zealand, L.M. Ellis, the Canadian who was first Director of Forests, also had six years with Canadian Pacific Railways, two years in the Canadian Forestry Corps during WWI, and less than a year with the Forestry Commission in the UK before coming to New Zealand in 1920. Suffice to say that professionally qualified foresters were still comparatively scarce when the state forestry departments were being established in Australia and New Zealand. All the applications for the New Zealand director's post are held together at Archives New Zealand in Wellington. My efforts to uncover the identities of other applicants for the chair of the Forests Commission of Victoria have foundered.

Resigning from the Forests Commission in 1925 for a new and less stressful (but still challenging) position with New Zealand Perpetual Forests did not foreshadow a truly happy ending. Elsie Jones remained in Melbourne (surviving until at least 1980); perhaps the plan was for her to shift to New Zealand after he had established himself. Putaruru where Jones was originally based was a small relatively remote country town. Perhaps there were other marital issues that had added to or even been

caused by the strains of his Forests Commission responsibilities. The professional and the personal spheres can't always be kept separate. In New Zealand, Owen Jones eventually remarried around 1946. In New Zealand he would be exclusively involved in company plantation forestry which he reported on in glowing terms in the *Empire Forestry Journal* in 1928. He was also a foundation member of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters in 1927 and, after WWII, served a term as its president.

### References

Owen Jones, 1928. "An Afforestation Company's Operations in New Zealand", in *Empire Forestry Journal*, 7(1), 64-75.

Resignation Mr Owen Jones Chairman Forests Commission. PROV, VPRS 11563 P0001 63/1620 Melbourne.

### WOOD CONSUMPTION IN SCOTLAND IN THE MIDDLE AGES

By Sybil Jack

How much wood was consumed in the ordinary maintenance of village life and property in northern Scotland in the late middle ages and early modern period? Alasdair Ross has published in the *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society* for 2010 an interesting survey of usage in the Lordship of Strathavon in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries based on a court case between the Gordon and Grant families over the right to take trees in the forest to maintain the buildings in the villages, and the tools needed for their economic life. It shows that the Grants claimed the right to wood for each of the places where they had rights, for the main supports of the roof (called couples), beams and joists, for the principle house, for the mills, for all farm buildings - including barns, byres, coites, kilns, stables and the houses of cottars and other servants - and some internal fittings and the wood needed for such things as ploughs, harrows, barrows, forks and spades. The inventory gives the number of trees required yearly for particular places - in one case 7540 trees - at various points saying, for example, "extending all the trees of the said particular houses to eighteen hundred trees of birk and alroun (i.e. birch and alder)". In various places, aspen, rowan, hazel and willow were also used. The counting is based on the number of trees required for each couple - ten or twelve trees - and the number required for the tail forks. It also assumed that the structures needed to be totally replaced every seven years.

The forests were already being coppiced so that the woods were being managed for these purposes as well as for the hunting that was often critical to the elite. The total number of trees in the surveys amount to 768,719 per annum which Ross tries to explain as possible with a regular cycle of coppicing.

Alasdair Ross (ed) 2010. "Two surveys of vernacular buildings and tree usage in the Lordship of Strathavon, Banffshire, 1585x1612". *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, Vol. XIV.

[deriv.nls.uk/dcn23/1271/7978/127179785.23.pdf](http://deriv.nls.uk/dcn23/1271/7978/127179785.23.pdf)

## WEST OTWAYS SAWMILLING - A WONKY START

By Norm Houghton

The Otway forest in its original form ran from near Wensleydale to Timboon and took in around 500,000 ha (on an 1869 calculation). The region was densely clothed in timber trees and watered as no other place in Victoria by torrential rainfall. The Otways were far too rough and wild for settlement, and no moves were made for such until the mid-1860s when the northern edges were thrown open to farming following a push by commercial and land lobby interests.

Despite this, there was concern in government that the forests in the Otways should be preserved and settlement restricted. Accordingly, the Kerferd government in 1873 barred further alienation and set aside 78,000 ha for forestry purposes. The settlers on the forest edge had a hard time of it and few succeeded in farming but this lesson was not heeded, especially around Colac, where an undercurrent of pro-development sentiment remained. A change of government to the Berry administration in 1875 saw the electors of Colac, through the local member J. Connor, press a compliant Lands Minister Longmore to remove restrictions on Otway settlement. This was agreed but, before action could be taken, the Berry Government fell after a few months in office and the incoming administration vetoed the Longmore plan.

The next elections in 1877 saw the return of Berry and Longmore along with a new member for Colac, W. O'Hea, who was a strong supporter of Otway settlement. At that time the local Colac economy was faltering and dipped even further over the next two years, so the argument was advanced by many that throwing open the Otway Ranges for farming would be a powerful economic stimulus to Colac.

This line of lobbying had the desired effect, so it was not unexpected when O'Hea and Longmore announced in 1879 that the Otways would be made available for selection. The amount of land set aside as timber reserves was limited to a mere 15,000 ha.

There were voices of objection from moderates who were dubious about settlement in forested areas, but these were swept aside by O'Hea when he said at the time that:

"general prosperity had declined in recent years and this, plus the land locking by graziers has resulted in unemployment for labourers and no business for the traders. Therefore these waste wooded lands are being made available for agriculture. There was a reservation placed on these lands some years ago that locked up these lands so I had to remove it. The Otway forest is out of place and mischievous in its influence. Forest on the coast stops rain coming inland so if the Otway forest is cut down the climate will improve and allow clouds to waft inland and rain north of Colac up to the Divide. As well the trees in the Otway forest are overmature and rotting and fit only for firewood, so it is not a 'forest' at all."

The *Colac Herald* backed O'Hea and enthused that:

"we well know that in a shorter time than most people imagine our pretty little town will have a

strong backbone in the shape of a producing and prosperous settlement in the Otway forest."

Under this thinking, the forest was seen as a hindrance to agriculture, and no worth given to it apart from a nuisance value that had to be eradicated. The farmers then moved in unencumbered by any thoughts of preserving timber. For the next 120 years to 2003 (when native vegetation protection legislation was introduced), private land owners managed to remove the trees from 308,000 ha (62%) of the original Otway forest at an average yearly rate of around 2600 ha.

Despite the advance of settlement on forested lands in the Otways, the sawmill lobby persisted in its efforts to retract some lands from settlement to secure exclusive saw log areas. The lobbyists had some success by the late 1890s when timber reserves were expanded to the south and south-east of Forrest and the south side of the main ridge near Apollo Bay.

Critics of the tree clearing policy continued their efforts into the 20th century. The Premier Tom Bent was an unexpected supporter of the cause when, on a visit to Colac in 1906, described the destruction of timber by settlers as "perfect vandalism". At the same time the Chamber of Mines put out a statement specifying that it:

"views with alarm the destruction of mining timber by throwing open forest and timber reserves for settlement. If the present disastrous policy of forest alienation and the consequent waste of forest products are allowed to go unchecked they will soon become altogether annihilated."

At the local level, there was the Colac Shire Valuer George Sydenham who, from 1907 to 1930, proclaimed at numerous public gatherings that the forest possessed more value than a gold or coal seam because it can reproduce itself every 25 years. He further stressed that land selectors in the West Otways had been paid by the state to burn the property of the state and the heritage of the people. Another critic was Norman Blackie of the Lavers Hill Progress Association, who said in 1915 that it was a scandal that such a vast quantity of valuable timber had been destroyed.

The context of the critics was that the government finally heeded complainants from several quarters and agreed to establish a forest service in 1908. This became the Forests Commission of Victoria in 1919.

The failure rate of farmers in the West Otways was extremely high, so there were many bush blocks that had not been completely cleared or the trees ringbarked and, in time, these could be cut over by sawmillers. Also, there were other landholders who sat on the timber in anticipation of the sawmillers arriving. The *Colac Herald* called these "shepherders of the land" and pointed out that these persons could make a financial killing when that day came.

This set the pattern for West Otway sawmilling operations of logging on selections - whether purchased, leased, timber rights negotiated or Crown-resumed - and meant that there were many mills of small to medium capacity that moved around from selection to selection. In fact, over the years there were to be more than 300

sawmills established by about 130 companies and partnerships in the West Otways. This contrasted with sawmilling in the East Otways, based on Forrest and Barwon Downs, where there were large tracts of unalienated Crown lands. Here the sawmillers could erect large plants and remain in the one place for decades.

**GUESSESSING THE EDEN FORESTS**

*By John Dargavel*

If one good recollection deserves another, then Terry Beath's account of assessing the south-east NSW forests around Eden (*AFHS Newsletter* 73, December 2017) deserves mine. In the early 1960s, the sudden interest by several Japanese companies in Australia's forests as a source of raw material for their pulp mills had excited state governments, forest services and companies alike, but we did not know how much wood we had, and the Japanese companies did not know whether it was really suitable. We had to assess it and they had to test it. I was working for the forestry subsidiary of Australian Paper Manufacturers (APM) and stationed in Gippsland at the time. I managed one of their plantation districts, but my main job was to map and assess the company's pine plantations and prepare plans for their future use. When the NSW government announced it would consider proposals for their south-east forests, APM wanted to bid. It did not need the wood, but thought that if it had the resource it might be able to build its own kraft mill there in the future. I think it must have been about August 1967 that I got my instructions: assess the resources, cut representative samples for the company's lab and a Japanese company. One of the engineers had to investigate the harbour, water and power. I think I was given about six weeks to report, and off I set the next day to recce the job.

Eden was a remote district for the NSW Forestry Commission where it charged only the very minimum royalty rates. Not enough to pay for much, but after knowing how well Victoria's districts were set up, I was surprised at how small the NSW forest set up was. Just as Terry Beath described, the district had a forester, two logging foremen and I think about six employees for firefighting and maintenance across a huge area. Duncans had a reasonably well set up sawmill in the district but, otherwise, there were only a couple of other very small mills; I think that one of them did not operate permanently and was owned by someone called Harris who would later become significant. I met Jack Henry early on the project, perhaps when I arrived. The commission gave me copies of its maps which were good, and APM supplied me with the big mosaic photo-map. What really surprised me was that the commission did not have a volume table for that type of forest, but Jack gave me the best he had - it was for second growth blackbutt that grew elsewhere.

I came back the next week with a small assessment crew that set up in some holiday flats out of the town. Our assessor, Dirk Paul, brought his family and an assistant. I think we must have hired a local faller and truck. There was no way that we could make a systematic assessment of such a large area in the time, so we decided to measure plots and cut samples selected as best we could to be

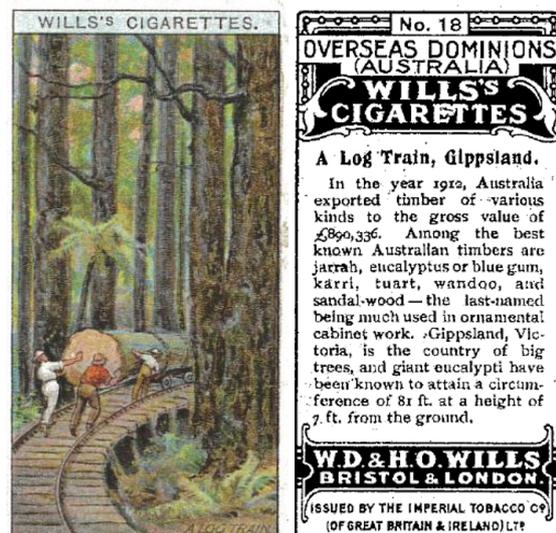
representative of the coastal forests that were to be made available for woodchip operations. The forests had been badly burnt, and most of the areas to be available had been picked over several times by the sawmillers. Many of the forest roads were hopeless, and had been put in bit by bit by the sawmillers. One we had to use ran up a creek bed. Apparently, the sawmillers stopped logging in the winter or wet weather and relied on stacks in their yards. For a large woodchip operation the roads would be quite inadequate.

We couldn't select plots too far from a track as we had to carry our billet-sized samples out for the Japanese lab. Each sample had to be numbered so that its species could still be identified in the labs. They were similar to some Victorian forests where I had supervised pulpwood logging operations and had got my eye in for very roughly how much a block might cut. Americans call it "cruising", but I call it "guessesting" and it works well enough. While the sampling work was proceeding steadily in the coastal areas, I ventured as far as I could get into the hillier areas behind them. A lasting memory is of the absolute beauty of some of the tall forests that had never been cut. It was a hectic time as I had to race backwards and forwards between Eden and Gippsland to keep my other work going and see my family. Happily they came back with me for a week or so and the triumph of our three-year old catching his first fish off the Eden jetty has become a legend in the family archive.

The project came to an end; the samples were trucked off and we were glad to get back to our homes in Traralgon. Dirk and I reported that the Forestry Commission would eventually produce their assessment, but in the meantime, there was certainly enough wood to start a mill, but new roads would have to be built. The company put in its bid, but was not successful.

As a postscript to my recollection, the successful bidder, Harris-Daishowa appointed Artie Jordan, one of APM's logging supervisors as manager of all its bush operations. He moved there not long before the woodchip mill started. The wet winter that year and the poor roads must have taxed his cheerful nature considerably.

**CIGARETTE CARD C.1915 - A LOG TRAIN, GIPPSLAND**



## THE MATLOCK FORESTS OFFICE, VICTORIA

By Peter Evans

The Matlock Forests Office had the dubious distinction of being the highest and most isolated forests office ever erected in Victoria and had a short life, being intermittently occupied from 1940 to 1961.



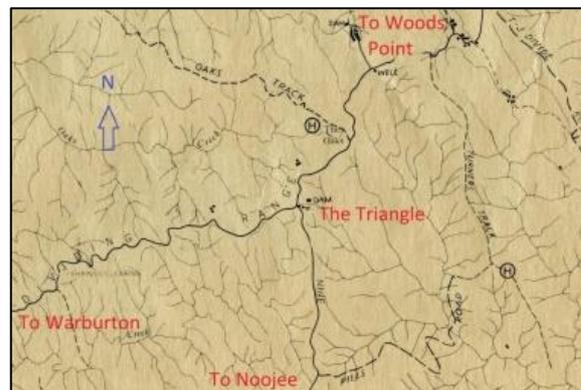
*Richard's Matlock sawmill prior to the 1939 bushfires. Photograph by Forester Rex Jones. Peter Evans collection.*

Following the 1939 bushfires, sawmilling in the Matlock forests returned to full production as part of the salvage effort, and day-to-day supervision needed to be more effective. A new forests office was built at "The Triangle" at the junction of the Yarra Track Tanjil tracks (at an elevation of 1140m, well above the winter snow line). Foresters during the operation of this office included C.T. Fletcher (April 1940 to January 1942), K.R. O'Kane (January 1942 to July 1947), L.K. Moore (July 1947 to August 1950), W.J. (Bill) Flentje (November 1950 to August 1952) and W.G.D. Middleton who controlled the district from October 1952 until July 1954.<sup>1</sup>

Matlock was one of the most remote districts to which a forester could be posted, and gave rise to the saying that young foresters had three choices, "Bendoc, Matlock or wedlock!"<sup>2</sup> Even married men posted to Matlock were not immune to the rigours of isolation. Charles Fletcher was one of the first men to be posted to the new forest office. His wife was pregnant and due to give birth during the fire season when Charlie was unable to leave his post. He eventually learnt of the birth of his first child via radio, the news shared with the handful of other forest offices then equipped with radio.<sup>3</sup>

The area at The Triangle grew to become a small settlement in its own right. The forests office itself had a steeply pitched roof to protect it from heavy snow and had the appearance of a small church. Bachelors' quarters were attached to the rear of the office. Adjacent to the office were three garages and an oil store. Further down the hill was the house for the forest officer and his wife, complete with an outside wash-house and a wood shed. Below the house was a fire-refuge dugout centrally located to all the buildings on the site. A dam in the gully provided water for domestic purposes and fire-fighting. Below the dam was a storage tank and an ablution block. Hot water was provided from a vertical boiler, and next

to the ablution block was a group of about six huts where the workers employed on forest duties were housed. These men remained at The Triangle only during the week and returned to Noojee on the weekends. An ample supply of firewood was a necessity for those living and working at The Triangle during the winter, and its supply was a spare-time task during the summer months. A portable saw bench would be brought up from Noojee until sufficient wood had been cut, split and stacked in sheds to see the resident officers through the winter. Wood was cut three feet long for use in open fires and one foot long for the wood-burning stoves used for cooking. Food was brought in from Woods Point or Warburton as required. Little or no social life was available as the nearest hotel was at Woods Point and most of the single workers were absent on the weekends.<sup>4</sup>



*Two 1960 images showing "The Triangle" forests office at Matlock in winter. Both photographs by Forest Foreman Jack Dwyer. Peter Evans collection.*

<sup>1</sup> FCV district administration records.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Forester Arthur Weetman 14 June 1995. Corroborated by information supplied by Forester Ted Stuckey.

<sup>3</sup> Forester Bert Semmens typescript - during the war Fletcher enlisted in the RAAF and was killed in action.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Forest Foreman Jack Dwyer 16 July 1995.

Planning for salvage operations began shortly after the 1939 fires. By the beginning of 1941, the fire-killed trees in the main Matlock alpine ash belts had already begun shedding their bark and surface cracks had penetrated up to one inch into the timber. The generally small size of the timber precluded dumping and treatment options and, in any case, water supplies on the ridge-top were too limited to spray salvage-felled timber. The existing mills were inadequate to completely convert the fire-killed timber before it deteriorated to an uneconomic condition and additional mills were to be constructed as soon as possible.<sup>5</sup> In conjunction with salvage planning, a review of the fire-protection plan for the Matlock district was another urgent consideration. If another fire occurred before the naturally regenerating alpine ash could reach maturity, the entire district would have to be replanted by hand. The new fire protection plan, devised in March 1941, gave priority to the construction of a comprehensive road system before any new breaks or strip burning were carried out. Fire towers were to be built at Mount Matlock and Mount Terrible and connected with each other and The Triangle telephone or radio. All mills were also to be connected by telephone. Water was to be conserved close to roads and tracks for the purposes of fire-fighting when required.<sup>6</sup> By 1944, a large part of the fire-protection work had been completed despite the war-time labour shortages experienced by both the sawmillers and the Forests Commission. By this date however, sawmilling in the Matlock district was beginning to wind-down as successful salvage of the fire-killed timber was completed. As the milling operations were regarded as the greatest contributor to local fire-risks, supervision of the area became less important as the mills closed one by one or amalgamated under the umbrella of a larger company.

As of the winter of 1945, the forester stationed at Matlock was withdrawn during the winter to McMahons Creek near Warburton, as no work could be usefully performed at Matlock due to the heavy snowfalls. By 1954, administrative control had shifted to Neerim, although a forest foreman was still stationed at Matlock during the summer months to oversee the five sawmillers and case-log licensees, four pulpwood contractors and smaller licensees cutting timber, as well as road construction operations. Although separate sets of books were kept for some years, Matlock ceased to be an autonomous district and was formally absorbed into the Neerim district in September 1960. The last Forests Commission personnel assigned to the Matlock office were Forester J. Downey and Forest Foreman Jack Dwyer in the summer of 1960-1961. Thereafter, all records of the district were maintained at Neerim.<sup>7</sup>

The area occupied by the forest office was replanted with alpine ash in 1978 but the dam, several exotic trees and the fence posts marking the boundary of the site remain today. In spring, the small clearing is ablaze with colour as the remnants of the forester's garden triumph over the attempt to hand the site back to the eucalypts.



*Above: The Triangle in December 2000.*

*Below: The remains of the fire refuge dugout at the Matlock Fire Tower. Both Photographs: Peter Evans.*



### **RELAUNCH OF THE "AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND FOREST HISTORIES" SERIES**

*By John Huth and Fintán Ó Laighin*

In the mid-2000s, the AFHS produced two volumes under the banner of "Australia and New Zealand Forest Histories". Both volumes were edited by John Dargavel and the first was sub-titled "Short Overviews" and the second "Araucarian Forests".

The AFHS committee has decided to do another of these "occasional papers" and John Huth has volunteered to edit and compile the volume. He is hoping to get six to eight papers of 2000 words each. There is no firm time-line on this but he would like to have the work completed by October this year.

The overall theme is not yet decided but one suggestion is to include a few papers on anniversaries. David Gough has the first paper done on 100 years of forest product research in Queensland. As 2018 is the centenary of the end of WWI, John himself has volunteered a paper on war memorials in Queensland's state forests.

If you have any thoughts, or better still, are willing to write a short paper (of any length or topic) please contact John at 0428 735 132 or [johnhuth55@gmail.com](mailto:johnhuth55@gmail.com).

<sup>5</sup> PRO, VPRS 11563/P1 unit 204 file 40/1395.

<sup>6</sup> PRO, VPRS 11563/P1 unit 214 file 41/615.

<sup>7</sup> PRO, VPRS 11563/ P1 unit 743, file 65/1548.

## PORTABLE STEAM ENGINES IN VICTORIAN SAWMILLING

By Peter Evans

The advent of increasingly effective control of forests in Victoria from 1908 brought with it some constraints on investment in sawmilling. Sawmillers were usually offered only a three year licence (with an area held in reserve for a subsequent three years on successful completion of the first three years' cutting). This short licence period restricted confidence and meant that sawmills were often small and shifted frequently. Similar constraints also impacted on firewood mills (often sited in station yards in order to facilitate transport), which were largely cutting off small areas of private property. The ideal power plant for these mills was therefore compact, easily moved, and required no expensive foundations. In addition, it needed to be able to burn the waste from the mill as fuel. The plant that fitted this requirement exactly was the self-contained portable steam engine. On wheels and, with engine and boiler combined, all it required was some bed-logs on which to sit, and some bracing on the wheels to prevent movement, and the engine could be belted-up direct to the mill plant.



*Hayden's sawmill under construction in the Otway Ranges, Victoria, in 1919. The mill is typical of most Victorian sawmills in the first half of the twentieth century. Note from the right to the left of the picture: the log yard with logs ready to be rolled onto the breaking-down bench track; the drive shaft for the saw benches; the skids to slide flitches from the breaking-down to the rip bench; the twin-cylinder portable steam engine; and, just to the left of the engine, the excavation for the export tramway. This mill was capable of cutting about 12 cubic metres of sawn timber per day. Beyond the sawmill, rough accommodation is under construction for the mill workers. (From an old postcard, Peter Evans collection.)*

An analysis of the boiler registration records in VPRS 7854/P1 and P2 reveals 429 portable steam engines registered to Victorian sawmillers between 1907 and 1935. (This accounts only for first registrations and not second-hand engines, but represents a reasonable picture of the breakdown by make, although skewed by the large number of unidentifiable engines - owners would often disguise the origin of the engine in order to claim that it was newer than it actually was.) As would be expected, UK manufacturers predominate, with Marshall Sons & Company making up fully one-third of all first registrations. Most of the smattering of Victorian-built

registrations probably represent the reboiling of existing UK engines, although David Munro and Wright & Edwards did make their own portable engines complete (if rather crude by UK standards).

Maker	No.	%
Marshall Sons & Company (UK)	143	33.33
Clayton & Shuttleworth (UK)	60	13.98
Unknown make, unknown location	50	11.66
Ruston Proctor (UK)	38	8.85
Brown & May (UK)	36	8.39
Ruston Hornsby (UK)	24	5.59
Robey & Coy (UK)	19	4.43
Ransome, Simms & Jeffries (UK)	15	3.50
Richard Garrett (UK)	14	3.26
Farmer, Robey & Coy (UK)	7	1.63
William Foster & Coy (UK)	4	0.93
Buffalo Pitts (USA)	3	0.73
Cowley (Ballarat)	2	0.47
Davey Paxman (UK)	2	0.47
David Munro (Melbourne)	2	0.47
Gibbons & Robinson (UK)	2	0.47
Fowler (UK)	1	0.23
Charles Burrell (UK)	1	0.23
P. & H. Gibbons (UK)	1	0.23
Luxford (sic) (UK?)	1	0.23
F. W. Grocke (Melbourne)	1	0.23
Powis Engineering (Melbourne)	1	0.23
William Goldsmith (Melbourne)	1	0.23
Wright & Edwards (Melbourne)	1	0.23
<b>Totals</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The fourth most popular engine was built by Brown & May in Devizes, England. As an example, this is the tale of two Brown & May portable engines owned by firewood sawmillers Stephen Young and Arthur Howell, who were active in the trade in the early years of the twentieth century.

Young & Howell concentrated their operations along the railway to Yarrowonga. The Benalla to Yarrowonga line was started in 1883 and completed in 1886. The line traversed mainly flat country, most of it settled, and most containing standing dead timber suitable for firewood. The railway provided a ready means to dispatch firewood, and commodious station yards a suitable place for a firewood mill. Unlike lumber sawmilling, firewood milling produced little waste, so it proved cheaper to bring the timber to the saw rather than the saw to the timber.

The business had its genesis when "Messrs Howell & Son of Euroa" placed a firewood plant at Devenish railway station in May 1907. By March 1908 the business had become "Young & Howell", and advertisements were placed for men to cart firewood to St James (a distance between two and five miles) at 14s and 21s per truck respectively. Since Young is rarely mentioned in the local newspapers, it is assumed he was the finance behind the operation and Arthur Howell the practical operator.<sup>1</sup>

On Tuesday 14 April 1908, the plant at the St James station yard was started. It was claimed to be able to cut

<sup>1</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 24 May 1907, p4; Tuesday 31 March 1908, p2.

one railway truck-load of firewood in one hour. For the two previous months wood had been stockpiled at the station, and it was considered that there was a supply of wood sufficient to keep the mill in operation for several years and employ thirty men in the operation.<sup>2</sup> In May 1908 alone, the partners forwarded 108 railway trucks of firewood to Melbourne.<sup>3</sup>

Since the land on which the mill was sited was controlled by the Victorian Railways (and the *Boilers Inspection Act* or BIA was not extended to country districts until 1911), inspection of plant on railway land fell to a government inspector of locomotives. In early 1909 that inspector ordered heavy repairs to the steam engines both at St James and at Goorambat. Considering their options, Young & Howell decided on the purchase of two new portable steam engines, both built by Brown & May. (New engines at a firewood mill were a rarity in Victoria; most Victorian firewood mills being home to the most worn-out engines imaginable!) The first of these new engines, Brown & May 8nhp portable No. 8006, was completed at the Devizes works on 18 September 1908, and arrived at St James via Melbourne agents Langwill Bros & Davies on Tuesday 4 May 1909, and was immediately pressed into operation.<sup>4</sup> In December 1909 the plant at Devenish was removed to St James, giving the partners two plants in that station yard.<sup>5</sup> In April 1910, one of the St James plants was removed to Cosgrove.<sup>6</sup>

The Goorambat firewood plant was powered by Brown & May 8nhp portable No. 8039, completed on 22 December 1908, and also ordered through Langwill Bros & Davies.<sup>7</sup> Arthur Howell and his family had moved from St James to Goorambat in March 1909, perhaps marking an increase in importance of that plant in the overall operations.<sup>8</sup> For the financial year 1908-09 the proprietors of the mill (one of two in the station yards) paid the Victorian Railways £2640 in freight charges.<sup>9</sup> In May 1915 Howell and his family moved to Beechworth<sup>10</sup> and, in September 1916, he retired from the business, leaving it in the hands of Stephen Young.<sup>11</sup> The Goorambat mill was still operating in 1918.<sup>12</sup>

Amazingly, both Brown & May engines survive. The one in the accompanying photographs (taken by Robert Gould) is at Mendooran in NSW, apparently recently salvaged from a nearby sawmill. The engine is relatively intact, with almost all fittings still in place. The BIA stampings on the backhead confirm that it is Brown & May No. 8039 from the Goorambat plant.



<sup>2</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 17 April 1908, p2.

<sup>3</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 12 June 1908, p4.

<sup>4</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 7 May 1909, p4; PROV, VPRS 7854/P2, unit 23, BIA 2284; Bedder, LJ (2012). *Brown & May Ltd, Devizes England*. Published by Alan & Ruth Rundle, Lincolnshire, pp31 & 251.

<sup>5</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 10 December 1909, p4.

<sup>6</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 15 April 1910, p4; Friday 12 May 1911, p2.

<sup>7</sup> PROV, VPRS 7854/P2, unit 23, BIA 2285; Bedder, LJ (2012). *Brown & May Ltd, Devizes England*. Published by Alan & Ruth Rundle, Lincolnshire, pp31 & 252.

<sup>8</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 5 March 1909, p4.

<sup>9</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 10 September 1909, p3.

<sup>10</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Tuesday 4 May 1915, p3.

<sup>11</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 1 September 1916, p2.

<sup>12</sup> *Benalla Standard*, Friday 12 April 1918, p3.

## THE DEMISE OF TIMBER BRIDGES

By Jane Lennon

Imports in the midst of plenty - why?

Why is sustainable forestry not being practised in the northern forests of NSW to supply local infrastructure needs?

These questions are raised by a report (*The Land*, 19 October 2017, p47) of the Shire of Tenterfield importing plywood from New Guinea rainforests for decking a bridge over Wallaby Creek. And when an old timber bridge over Beaury Creek near Urbenville failed, the neighbouring Kyogle Council came to the rescue with an in-house designed relocatable bridge.

The Kyogle Shire director of assets and infrastructure, Tony Lickiss, says timber is no longer desired as material in modern bridges. Timber bridges were designed for "a three tonne Bedford truck with three beasts in the back, whereas today we have a truck and dog hitting the bridge surface at 100kph and modern bridge materials can cope with this stress". Kyogle is using pultrusion-formed composite beams which withstand rust and termites. Pultrusion is a continuous process for the manufacture of products having a constant cross section and involves pulling raw materials (rather than pushing as is the case in extrusion) through a heated steel forming die using a continuous pulling device. Pultruded products have high structural properties.

Kyogle Shire has 321 bridges; of the 167 which are timber, 70 are more than 70 years old. Six aging timber bridges on Gradys Creek and Lions Roads were damaged following Cyclone Debbie in January 2017 and have been replaced; this entailed closing the road across the border to south-east Queensland for the year. More bridges are being "transferred" as agencies relinquish responsibility for maintenance of former logging roads such as two bridges on Peacock Creek Road that were in disrepair after NSW Forestry closed them several years ago.

Most residents in the Shires of Tenterfield and Kyogle know family members who worked in the extensive timber industry until the late 1990s and they cannot believe that imported timber was used on a bridge surrounded by forests of high quality hardwood. These forests are now in national parks which are not managed, with dense lantana understorey taking over, abandoned access tracks, visitors not encouraged and declining staff numbers.



Meanwhile the longest timber bridge in NSW - the 300 metre timber truss bridge built between 1899 and 1903 across the Clarence River on the Bruxner

Highway at Tabulam between Casino and Tenterfield - is being replaced. The new bridge is a concrete and steel structure capable of carrying two lanes of B-double

traffic. There is no funding to keep the historic structure but after community consultation it was decided to have replica trusses built into the new bridge design.

The timber bridge is comprised of 13 timber trestle approach spans and five composite timber/steel de Burgh truss central spans which are supported by concrete piers located in the river. The overall width between kerbs is 4.6 metres, accommodating only single lane traffic. Extensive maintenance work has been conducted over recent years to ensure the bridge remains safe for legally loaded vehicles. However, the bridge presents significant transport limitations both now and into the future, and also requires a disproportionate share of the NSW Government's bridge maintenance funding.

In 2011, the Roads and Traffic Authority (now Roads and Maritime Services) released a timber truss bridge conservation strategy. It identified the bridges least likely to face increasing freight traffic and which can be preserved without affecting the regional road network; it also involves removing and adding some bridges to the State Heritage Register. The conservation strategy aimed to strike a balance between heritage and transport needs. The RMS manages around 5000 bridges across the state with 20 per cent of its bridge maintenance budget spent on its 48 timber truss bridges. Of the 48 bridges, the RMS is proposing to retain 25 bridges that would reflect the history and diversity of timber truss style bridges. It is proposed that 23 timber truss bridges be replaced with a modern bridge.

In our neighbourhood, it now means taking a rutted back road to experience the rattle and wobble of timber planking as one crosses and looks down into the creek below.

### Further reading

Ian Arthur, Jan 2013. "Timber Truss Bridges of NSW". *ASHET News. Newsletter of the Australian Society for Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp4-6. [www.ashet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/News-January-2013.pdf](http://www.ashet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/News-January-2013.pdf)

Australian Society for History of Engineering and Technology, nd. "Timber Truss Bridges of NSW". [ashet.org.au/timber-truss-bridges](http://ashet.org.au/timber-truss-bridges)

Heritage Council of NSW, July 2011. *Timber Truss Road Bridges of NSW: Review of Roads and Traffic Authority's proposed approach to conservation*. [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/media/TimberTrussBridgeStrategy.pdf](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/media/TimberTrussBridgeStrategy.pdf)

NSW Roads and Maritime Services, Aug 2012. *Timber Truss Bridge Conservation Strategy. Submissions report and revised conservation strategy*.

[www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/projects/key-build-programs/maintenance/timber-truss-road-bridges/120800-timber-truss-bridges-subs-revised-strategy-august-2012.pdf](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/projects/key-build-programs/maintenance/timber-truss-road-bridges/120800-timber-truss-bridges-subs-revised-strategy-august-2012.pdf)

NSW Roads and Maritime Services, nd. "Timber truss bridges".

[www.rms.nsw.gov.au/about/environment/protecting-heritage/timber-truss-bridges.html](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/about/environment/protecting-heritage/timber-truss-bridges.html). (Among other things, this page advises that a book on the history of timber truss bridges authored by Lenore Coltheart, with Ian Berger and Denis Gojak, would be published during 2017.)

NSW Roads and Traffic Authority, July 2011. *Timber truss road bridges: A strategic approach to conservation*.

## CAMALDULENSIS

By Rob Youl

Red gum savannahs once so vast  
For millennia their shadows cast  
Across the tribal hunting grounds  
Amid a feast of primeval sounds  
Trunks columnar, mottled grey  
Legions anchored in sandy clay  
Canopies a dappled green  
Seasonally a flowery mien  
Branches shed from time to time  
Leaving cavities - shelter prime  
For mammals, birds and bats  
And marauding goannas and rats  
Those branches drying, strewn  
For decades perhaps, until consumed  
By friendly fires of Koorie camps  
Allaying hunger, cold and damp  
Harbouring insects by the swarm  
Myriad organisms were the norm  
Under the bark, munching greenery  
Part of the ecological scenery!  
And relentless fungi and ants and more  
Attacked the red gum's woody core  
Fifty to a hundred decades thus  
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust ...  
The big'uns dropped seed continually  
A seedling survived, became a tree  
One in a million, maybe less  
Died a veteran - as for the rest  
Grazed by 'roos or burnt by fires  
Lightning or hunter lit the pyres  
Of numberless seedlings that disappeared  
Unfulfilled, year by year  
The survivors dominated the plains  
At home in drought or heavy rain  
Responding as the climates changed  
Subtly extending or shrinking range  
Gariwerd outwash, volcanic fumes  
Lakes and swamps and lunette dunes  
Lava flows and sands windblown  
Megafauna - wombats overgrown!  
Scores of millennia pass  
Ecosystems of gums and grass  
Another change - along came Man  
And his ability to clan and plan  
Stalk the emu, harvest yams  
Corangamite, Tarrayoukyan  
Canoe scar a Koorie rune  
Campfire sagas under the moon

Ochre pits, and stone-axe blaze  
Then Mitchell and the bullock drays  
Longboats on *his* Glenelg River  
Mount William's winds made riders quiver  
Two hundred years with us around  
Settlers needed the red gums' ground  
For sheep and crops and living space  
We cleared them at a rollicking pace  
So much waste!  
What shocking haste!  
Insensitive to their age and grace  
Bloody base!  
Mortised for a post-and-rail  
Split and interlocked at Harrow gaol  
And the shearing shed at Kout Narin  
Gossamer fleece and shearers lean  
Fence posts, light-rail sleepers  
It's our land now! Finders keepers!  
Today the timber's appreciated  
Boutique floorboards, balustraded  
A glorious russet-coloured timber  
From Kimberley to Mirrimbah  
Australia's most widespread tree  
Symbol of our superb country  
Is it the most Antipodean tree?  
Yet there is an irony ...  
*camaldulensis*, botanists call this plant  
Referring to a locale distant  
Camaldule's a monastery in Italia ...  
Not a farming district in Australia!  
Who cares? So what!  
We must protect, extend the trees we've got!  
I trust my grandkids, as is my bent  
Can delight in red gums ancient  
Can sense their venerability  
Their strength and complex poetry  
Scattered still across the landscape  
West wind skews their Lego shape  
Outer branchlets dying back  
A dead-end-road? Red Gum Track!  
As a boy with crosscut saw I stood  
Helping Dad cut winter's wood  
I took each block and backed it off  
Cross-grained red gum isn't soft!  
Now I work with Landcare squads  
Is it the twilight of the gods?  
Or can we massively regenerate  
The finest tree of the Garden State?

## THE WRITING OF "FOREST CAPITAL"

By Brendan O'Keefe

*The December 2017 issue of our newsletter included a short piece on the release of a book titled "Forest Capital: Canberra's foresters and forestry workers tell their stories". The book is by Queanbeyan historian Brendan O'Keefe and is based on a series of interviews which he conducted in 1994-95. The book arrived too late to do a "proper" review, but readers were advised that "Future issues of the newsletter will include summaries of the stories."*

*The intention is still to do that, but it has been delayed in order to fit in the transcript of a talk which Brendan gave to the Queanbeyan History and Heritage Network on 12th April 2018. The talk was part of the Queanbeyan-Palerang Heritage Festival, which is part of the broader Canberra and Region Heritage Festival.*

*Brendan spoke about how the project came about and what it entailed, and included observations on the importance of oral history. It provides a useful introduction to the summaries of the interviews that we will include in future issues.*

Fintán Ó Laighin

### 1. Genesis of the oral history project

This whole project was initiated back in 1994 when Graham McKenzie-Smith was the Director of Forests in the ACT. Graham had a strong interest in history in general and, because he's a forester himself, in forestry in particular. In fact he's currently writing a book on the history of forestry in the ACT. In 1994, he was eager to get an oral history program up and running so that some of the people who'd worked in Canberra's forests for a long time and who were getting on in years could be interviewed on tape. He wanted to get their experiences recorded in their own words before it was too late.

Graham chose ten subjects to be interviewed. He took good care to select a range of individuals who occupied different positions and performed a variety of roles in the forests. They included professional (i.e. university-trained) foresters, forestry workers, the former manager of the Integrated Forest Products facility at Hume, the late Terry Connolly, who was also a professional forester, and a logging contractor - Frank Rosin who lived in Queanbeyan. Frank (born 1932) and his brother Gino came to Australia in 1956 from northeastern Italy where their family had a small farm.

Almost all of the interviewees worked in one capacity or another in the ACT's forests in the post-war period; indeed, the experience of eight of the total of ten interviewees belongs exclusively to those years. From their different viewpoints as participants in the events of that time, their interviews tell in their own words the story of forestry in the ACT from the late 1940s to the mid-1990s. But the interview transcripts also reach right back to the 1920s and even earlier. This derives from the personal knowledge of such interviewees as Ian Gordon, Professor Lindsay Pryor, Ron Murray and Tony Fearnside, as well as the direct experience of the late Harold Tuson who started work in Canberra's forests as early as 1926.

### 2. Importance of forestry in the ACT

Forestry has had a long and important role in development of the ACT, but few people are aware of the part it has played. When people think about Canberra's pine forests, they're more likely to think about the tragic bushfires of January 2003 or, on the other hand, to view them more positively as an aesthetic backdrop to the city and an outlet for recreational activities. Notwithstanding the tragedy arising from the forest fires of 2003 - as well as similar conflagrations in 1939 and 1952 - forestry has been an important and, actually, essential element in the development, economic and otherwise, of the nation's capital.

The landscape in which Canberra as the so-called "bush capital" sits is to a large extent a forest landscape. This is not just in the immediate city environs, but also in the Capital Territory at large. The term "bush capital" when applied to Canberra's surrounding forests conveys the impression that the city occupies a pristine natural environment. However, the native tree species that populate Canberra's hills and ridges are as much a man-made artefact as the exotic species - the pine trees - or even the trees and shrubs that adorn the city's streets. One reason that the book is titled *Forest Capital* is to make the point that Canberra's "bush" setting is to a large extent a forest setting and one that has been deliberately fashioned by human hand.

By the time Canberra was chosen as the site for the nation's capital, the natural environment in the area had been severely degraded. The hills and ridges had largely been stripped of trees for grazing purposes and for firewood, and they were eroded and infested with rabbits. The clearing and erosion extended much further afield, too, notably to the Cotter River catchment. In a report in 1910, the geographer Griffith Taylor wrote that:

"One of the most urgent matters in connexion with the territory is that of forest preservation. The suicidal cutting and clearing of trees of every inch of timber is appalling. The steep slopes of the ridges are covered with loose material composed of a mixture of boulders and soil."

And he went on to say that with no tree roots left to bind the loose soil and rocks, rain washed away all of the loose material into gullies.

"(T)he destruction of native timber should be stopped immediately on all high stony grounds unsuitable for pasture", he said, and added that the matter of replanting was already under consideration.

But quite apart from restoring the forest cover and arresting erosion, there was another major problem: there simply wasn't enough timber in the area to actually build the national capital. At that time, very little timber of commercial value existed in the Territory. The native timber that was available was generally not suitable for building and what did exist was inaccessible and in short supply. Nothing less was needed than the establishment from scratch of a local forestry industry.

The Commonwealth government certainly took the matter seriously. In May 1913, the government appointed Thomas Charles (TCG) Weston as Officer-in-Charge of Afforestation in Canberra. As part of his duties, he was given responsibility for laying the foundations for a forestry program in the Capital Territory. The first manifestation of his program was the planting of radiata pine on Mount Stromlo in mid-1915 to reintroduce forest cover on the hill's summit which had been ravaged by fire, deliberate clearing and the depredations of rabbits. Native trees were also planted to replace those lost on Mount Pleasant and Mount Mugga Mugga, and on Mount Majura the natural regeneration of native tree species was encouraged.

From the outset, however, Weston had been well aware of the commercial dimension to establishing forests in Canberra. The pine and native plantations that he started marked the origins of forestry in the ACT for both aesthetic and more utilitarian purposes. And this is the other reason behind the title of the book. The plantations constituted a build-up of capital value in the form of usable timber.

In September 1923, the Commonwealth appointed Charles Edward Lane Poole as its adviser on forestry. In April 1925, he recommended that the government establish 20,000 acres (about 8100 hectares) of pine forest in the Capital Territory for commercial purposes. As a further mark of how important the federal government regarded forestry in those days, it set up the Commonwealth Forestry Bureau in April 1927 to advise the government on forestry, carry out research and provide higher education for foresters. Lane Poole was appointed the first Inspector General of Forests. At the same time, the government established the Australian Forestry School at Westridge - now Yarralumla - to train foresters. The school moved from Adelaide where it had been temporarily set up in March 1926. Lane Poole became the Acting Principal of the school in Canberra.

As with much else in the development of the national capital, it was the inception of the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) in January 1925 under J.H. Butters - later Sir John Butters - that spurred a vigorous forestry program in the ACT. The commission wanted to put forestry on an economic basis as soon as possible. It established a Forestry Branch in 1926 and appointed Geoffrey Rodger as Chief Forester, with Max Jacobs as Assistant Forester. Jacobs' first and most important task was to carry out a detailed survey of the whole of the Territory's forest resources. As well, two new forest areas were established at Pierces Creek and Kowen, in addition to that at Mount Stromlo. Overseers were appointed at each of the forest areas. One of the original overseers was Harold Tuson who was briefly at Pierces Creek before moving over to Kowen. He is the one of the forestry workers I interviewed in the interview program. Harold and his family lived in the old McInnes homestead at Kowen.

As Jacobs embarked on his survey, Rodger expanded Weston's existing pine plantings on Mount Stromlo and established fresh pine plantations at Uriarra and Kowen

in 1926 and Pierces Creek in 1928. Another 5000 eucalypts were planted on Mount Pleasant and native tree species were allowed to regenerate in part of Kowen, while other parts were prepared for plantation pine by clearing wattle that had colonised former grazing land. Apart from commercial and any other projected uses in the medium to long term, one immediate purpose of the plantings was to conserve and improve soils, especially on slopes like Mount Stromlo that had been largely stripped of tree cover. There was also a particular additional need for, and value in, the plantations at Uriarra and Pierces Creek. These plantations helped to protect the Cotter River catchment, the source of Canberra's water supply.

The new forestry program was also needed to address a looming crisis in the capital. As part of his survey, Jacobs found that supplies of firewood near the city were "rapidly diminishing", an alarming prospect for a place with such long and hard winters. In 1928-29, with the Territory's population only around 8500, there was just eight years' supply within a ten-mile radius of the city. When Canberra reached its projected population of 50,000, Jacobs and Rodger calculated that the city would need at least 60,000 imperial tons of firewood per year. As native hardwood trees in the area were the source of firewood, they set aside reserves at Kowen and Black Mountain as some kind of insurance against rising demand, though they well knew that this fell far short of a complete solution to the problem.

From an economic point of view, however, the greatest value of the Territory's forests lay in their future exploitation as timber for building purposes in the national capital. Overwhelmingly, this applied to the new softwood (i.e. pine) plantations. Timber from local native trees that could be used as building material for houses and other structures in the city was neither abundant nor accessible. Hence, the plantation pine around Canberra was vital for the building of the federal capital and this was in fact the principal rationale for developing the plantations from 1915 onward. The first timber was made available from thinnings of the Mount Stromlo plantations in 1930 by the new Forestry Officer, Cyril Cole. It was something of an irony that this was just when construction in Canberra was petering out with the onset of the Depression and the winding-up of the FCC.

Cole, who was the ACT's sole Forestry Officer from 1929 until 1936 when he gained an Assistant Forester in the person of Lindsay Pryor, was able to maintain the program of planting and thinning softwoods throughout the Depression. But the commercial exploitation of Canberra's pine forests really picked up in the decades following World War 2.

### ***3. Value of oral history***

Generally, oral history interviews offer personal views and insights that are absent from sober official reports and files; in so doing, they complement and enlarge upon the official version of events. Such is the case with the interviews here. However, the interviews have attained additional importance as historical sources in their own

right because a substantial part of ACT Forests' records have been lost, burned in the bushfires of 2003. While it is by no means impossible to reconstruct the pre-2003 history of forestry in the ACT from older files, annual reports and other published and oral sources, the interview transcripts provide details that are now no longer available anywhere else.

There are drawbacks, though, with oral history. Frank Rosin's nephew Nino and his wife Laurel pointed out that Frank made some gross factual errors when talking to me in his interview. Fortunately, these have been corrected in a recent interview I've done with Nino and they may soon appear. Frank himself now lives on the south coast and suffers from severe dementia. One wonders whether the errors of fact that he made in his interview were early signs of the condition. With no indication of any problem at the time of the interview, however, there was no reason to doubt the veracity of what Frank was saying.

Another problem with oral history is that the interviewees can choose, if they wish, to talk only cursorily about or even totally conceal things they don't want to discuss. A memorable instance of this occurred some years ago when I was interviewing a person of some notability who had come and settled in Australia. As is fairly usual in the course of interviews, I asked him about his family background. He talked at length about his father's father, but when I asked him a couple of times about his mother's side he dismissed the questions, claiming that he didn't know much about them.

After the interview was completed, we were sitting in his lounge room having a cup of tea when he produced some old family photograph albums. In one of them, there were pictures of his mother's family and forebears. I instantly realised that there was quite a story to be told about them and that, to my chagrin, I had completely missed it. However, I also realised that he didn't want to talk about this side of his family and that I would never get anything out of him on it.

A reverse of this problem that you encounter in interviews is people who ramble on endlessly about events and people of little or no relevance to the topic under discussion. You have to do your best to try to keep them to the topic, while being aware that their rambling digressions will occasionally yield invaluable nuggets of information - details you might not otherwise get. Other interviewees can be infuriatingly taciturn, giving monosyllabic answers to your enquiries and offering nothing else. At times, I've had to half-answer the questions myself in the hope that it will spark a more voluble response.

There's yet another quirk of oral history interviews that relates to the preparation for them. It is not uncommon when you first meet or contact a prospective interviewee that they are all too happy to tell you all the scandalous bits straightaway. But when you eventually do the interview with them, they clam up and won't talk about these bits. Perhaps they fear that if they talk about the "juicy bits" in a recorded interview, they might be laying themselves open to being sued.

#### *4. The interview process*

The interviews were recorded in the sound studio of the Australian War Memorial. As we'll see, there are distinct advantages in conducting interviews in a studio. But the studio environment can be a bit unfamiliar and even slightly unsettling at first to interviewees.

At the opening of most of the interviews for this program, the interviewees were at first a bit stiff and formal. This was due both to the unfamiliar environment and to the necessary formalities that preceded each interview: clipping a microphone onto their coat or jumper, testing sound levels and reading out the formal identification at the start of the interview. After the first two or three questions, however, the interviewee typically forgot about the microphone and the studio environment, relaxed and talked more freely. In other words, they slipped comfortably into conversation mode.

One of the greatest advantages of conducting interviews in a sound studio is that you as the interviewer can focus entirely on what the interview subject is saying, without having to worry about anything else. Before you do an interview, you have to - or you should - research the background of the interview subject and prepare a list of draft questions to ask. However, the list of questions is really just a guide, rather than a fixed or rigid blueprint for carrying out something that would amount to a KGB-like interrogation. The interview, I think, should be more like a discussion and, when you're asking the questions you've prepared, you've got to be ready for unexpected answers that you need to follow up on. It's often the case that the interviewee will say a number of things you weren't expecting and you've got to concentrate hard, keep them all in mind and not forget to follow up these unexpected leads when you get the chance. It can be mentally quite exhausting and you can do without other distractions.

What I mean by distractions here are the essential technical aspects of the interview. When you're in a studio, you have the sound technician on the other side of the soundproof glass constantly monitoring and, if necessary, adjusting the sound levels. I've carried out interviews in people's homes where I've had to keep a close eye on the sound levels myself and it can be very distracting, making the whole interviewing process more difficult.

The sound technician was particularly useful in a few of the forestry interviews I conducted. Interviewees often like to use hand gestures to accompany what they're saying. But this can occasionally create a technical problem. In waving their arms about to illustrate a point, the interviewees not infrequently brushed the microphone clipped to them, thus obliterating from the recording what they were actually saying. These occurrences immediately drew frantic hand signals to stop from the technical officer who was on the other side of the sound-proof glass. The interviewee then dropped the hand gestures until the next time he forgot about the microphone and started gesticulating all over again. In this way, a number of blanks cropped up in the recordings and transcripts where words or phrases were

lost because of accidental interference with the microphone.

Incidentally, interviewees often accompanied their words with facial expressions and hand gestures. In all cases, while the meaning of what they were saying was perfectly clear to the interviewer, the gestures and expressions do not of course translate into the sound recordings or transcripts.

Among other advantages of interviewing in a studio is that you don't get any external noise in the recording and you don't get interrupted. In another series of interviews I conducted on a different subject years ago, I had to do one of the interviews in the interview subject's home because he was in poor health. In the days leading up to the interview, I impressed on him and his wife a few times that we needed a quiet room where we wouldn't be interrupted. Come the day we were set up in the lounge room, the interview started and then the family dog started barking incessantly right outside the window. I was more or less coping with this when, about halfway through the interview and without any warning, the man's wife burst into the room talking at the top of her voice and carrying a tray with a teapot, cups and saucers that all rattled noisily.

### **5. Publication process**

I completed the interview program in March 1995 and there the matter rested for over 20 years. Unbeknownst to me, among the records that were destroyed in the 2003 bushfires were the original sound recordings of the interviews. But during 2016, the forestry people within the ACT Parks and Conservation Service discovered that transcripts of the interviews had survived. They quickly became very keen to resurrect or rescue the project by publishing the transcripts in book form. They realised that, with the loss of most of ACT Forests' other records in the fires, the transcripts had become much more important as a record of the history of forestry in the ACT.

The publication project kicked off properly early last year. An immediate problem with it was that the surviving transcripts were uncorrected copies. This meant that I had to correct the copies without the benefit of the sound recordings. It was something of a challenge. This was especially the case with names of people and places. Most of these were unfamiliar to the transcribers and they therefore put down just what they heard. You can't really blame them for this, but the spelling of many of the names was quite mangled. However, with a lot of help from various forestry people and others we managed to identify pretty much all places and people, and correct all other anomalies.

One particular challenge was to make Harold Tuson's interview readable or intelligible. Harold was born in Tasmania, northwest of Hobart, in 1898 and had had limited schooling during his upbringing in Tasmania. In the interview, he said very uncharitably (in my opinion) of himself, "I was backward when I was born and I've steadily lost ground ever since". In fact, he was by no means stupid or backward; he just never had the

opportunity to get a reasonable education. In speaking to him, he spoke in this old-fashioned and I now suspect defunct bush style. I understood him perfectly when I interviewed him, but when I saw the transcript, it looked like gobbledygook. I put a lot of work into making it readable, not by changing his words, but by inserting extra words in square brackets, splitting up his sentences and putting in a serious quantity of punctuation.

The transcripts published here retain the exact words as spoken by the interviewees, even when they've made mistakes with such details as dates and names. However, at various places where the meaning of what the interviewee said was unclear, clarification was provided by inserting words or short phrases in square brackets; the brackets indicate that they are additions to the text and not part of the original interview. At other places, footnotes were added to further explain or expand upon something that an interviewee referred to. In a couple of instances, short phrases in which an interviewee repeated himself word for word have been omitted. In like manner, a few repetitions or superfluous comments made by me the interviewer have been left out with no detriment to the transcripts.

Without altering the actual words spoken, an effort was also made to improve the readability of the transcripts, especially in those cases where interviewees tended to talk in almost endless sentences containing a multitude of conjunctions and subordinate clauses. This was done by introducing punctuation marks to split these sentences into more easily understood chunks. For the sake of readability, too, intimidatingly long blocks of text in the original transcripts were broken up into smaller paragraphs.

In the book, the interviews were not published in the order in which they were conducted. Instead, they were arranged in a generally, but not wholly, chronological order in which the interviewees became involved in forestry in the ACT. The order is not rigidly chronological because some preference was given to those like Ian Gordon and Lindsay Pryor who had a more extensive or longer-term view of the historical development of the forests and forestry in the national capital.

The interview transcripts were published in book form late last year under the title, *Forest Capital: Canberra's foresters and forestry workers tell their stories*. To accompany the transcripts, I wrote a general introduction to the book which included an historical summary of the development of forestry in the ACT, while the book also contains a fairly lengthy chronology of the history of forestry in the Territory up to the time of the interview program. There are also brief biographical introductions to each of the ten interview transcripts, and the text is illustrated by photographs and maps that were gathered from a variety of sources, including the interview subjects or their families. And as a result of the rediscovery and publication of the transcripts of the 1994-95 interview program, a new interview program has now been launched and is well underway.

## 100 YEARS OF FOREST PRODUCT RESEARCH IN QUEENSLAND

By Fintán Ó Laighin

An article on p9 mentions that David Gough has prepared a paper on 100 years of forest product research in Queensland which will be published later this year in the relaunched "Australia and New Zealand Forest Histories" series.



To celebrate the centenary, the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries had an open day at its Salisbury Research Facility in April 2018. An accompanying media release issued by the Queensland Minister for Agricultural Development and Fisheries,

Mark Furner, noted

that "We've certainly come a long way since 1918 when the then Director of Forests Edward Swain first established the Forest Products Bureau in Queensland. Mr Swain recognised that the unchecked take of favoured timber species from our native forests was unsustainable. Uses had to be found and markets developed for the lesser-known species. To achieve this, a forest products laboratory was needed."

Mr Furner also noted that the Queensland Government had operated research facilities at Newstead in Brisbane, and also at Woolloongabba where there was a small sawmill as well as drying kilns. The Salisbury facility opened in 1965. The minister's media release is available at [statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2018/4/19/100-years-of-working-wonders-with-wood](http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2018/4/19/100-years-of-working-wonders-with-wood).



Timber company Hyne & Son also marked the occasion, issuing a media release saying that "Richard Matthews (RM) Hyne, founder of Hyne Timber and Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly successfully introduced a motion

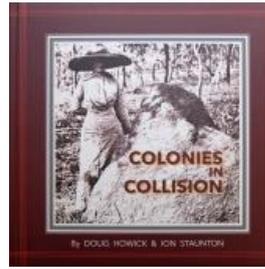
that the government take immediate action in the replanting of forests and the creation of a Department of Forestry."

The release also notes that one of his other actions as an MLA was the introduction of "a Women's Suffrage Bill, arguing strongly for gender equality. Unfortunately this was too visionary at that time and was defeated."

Hyne established Hyne Timber, then called the National Saw and Planing Mill, on the banks of the Mary River in Maryborough in 1882.

The company's media release is available at [www.hyne.com.au/article/142/celebrating-100-years-of-forest-and-forestry-product-research-in-queensland](http://www.hyne.com.au/article/142/celebrating-100-years-of-forest-and-forestry-product-research-in-queensland).

## NEW BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



Doug Howick & Ion Staunton, 2017. *Colonies in Collision, a concatenated chronicle of termites and termiteers<sup>(R)</sup> in Australia 1788-2018*. Self-published by Termiteer Pty Ltd, Pacific Pines QLD 4211, 248pp illustrated, hardback.

ISBN 978-0-646-97218-3. Available directly from the publisher at <https://termiteer.com.au>. Cost \$55 plus postage.

Review by Ian Bevege

Concatenation: *The taking and merging of two separate themes into one; a series of interconnected or interdependent things or events.*

History, it has been said, is written by the victors thus allowing the enshrining in the narrative of their particular perspective on protagonists and events; Tudor writing on the War of the Roses is arguably the classic case. Closer to our own times, the "history wars" of revisionist historians debating early colonial settlement have provided ample opportunity for both sides to display their biases in their interpretation of events. All such interpretations, developed with the benefit of hindsight and privilege, necessarily draw upon an earlier written or oral record and hence are in themselves derivative; in strictly legalistic terms they are merely hearsay albeit dressed up in academic respectability. Seldom are the historians party to the events they record and interpret.

Doug Howick and Ion Staunton call their book a chronicle of the "Termite Wars" rather than a history; the human participants waging this war, from aboriginals through the early settlers to the present day, are the termiteers (incidentally a term the authors have formally trade-marked); their antagonists are that most evolutionary successful group of insects the *Isoptera*, whose armies are composed of some five family divisions organised into 27 brigades of genera and innumerable battalions of species (depending on the taxonomic fashion of the moment); the soldiers and workers in these highly organised armies are as uncountable as they are effective in carrying out their ecological function of recycling wood.

Doug and Ion have been active participants over many decades in this on-going battle protecting man-made wooden structures and forests against termite attack and now, in retirement, have been able to chronicle this battle from first-hand experience gained throughout their professional lives. Doug was an entomologist with CSIRO and, in the latter years of his career, was National Executive Director of the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association (AEPMA), and remains a life member of the International Research Group on Wood Protection. Ion started out as an industry technician, became a TAFE NSW teacher and wrote the first textbook on termite control in 1961 with Phil Hadlington of the Forestry Commission of NSW for their industry

training courses; other text books followed. He managed the early industry associations in NSW and has patented his Termite Trap. Both authors therefore bring to this book a wealth of personal experience of termite biology and management as well as an in depth grasp of the developments that have taken place historically since the earliest crude attempts by the first settlers to control an insect pest which was entirely foreign to their British experience.

However this is no dry "Official History" but a very lively story, laced with the odd witticism that lightens the tone of the text, about the people over two centuries who have led the charge against their new-found foe and the nature and proclivities of that foe itself. For readers familiar with Maurice Maeterlinck's somewhat ponderous *Life of the White Ant*, first published in 1927, there will be some surprises in this new book, reflecting as it does nearly another century of research. The vignettes on termite biology make for easy reading for non-biologists, aided by the large if somewhat unusual format (the hardcover book is 26cm x 26 cm) copiously illustrated with first class photographs of everything from a discarded horseshoe in a termite mound to the Christo-like drapery of the Queensland Parliament Building Brisbane in June 1979 in preparation for methyl bromide fumigation for drywood termite infestation (caused by *Cryptotermes brevis*) by Rentokil - termites introduced by the American Army during WWII: for those involved in this operation, certainly a once in a life-time experience and well documented here.



*The Queensland Parliament building in 1979.  
 Photograph by Ian Bevege.*

The *dramatis personae* featured in the book are far too many to list here but the contributions start with one Henry Smeathman in 1781 with his seminal paper on African white ants sponsored to the Royal Society by Joseph Banks, and progress through such pioneering scientists as Charles French, Walter Froggatt, Eugene Marais (in South Africa), Gerald Hill and Frank Gay to the entomologists of the 21st century such as Brenton Peters, Bob Eldridge and Jim Creffield. On the practicalities of termite control, the first real breakthrough came from Bill Flick, dairy farmer from near Lismore who, from observing the behaviour of bees on his farm, established the principle of killing termites in the nest by exploiting their feeding habits. He

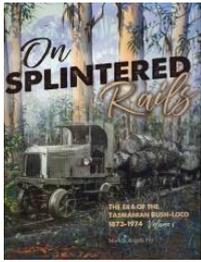
developed and patented the first really effective termiticide and went on to establish Flick and Company, now an "Aussie icon" with its catch phrase "One flick and they're gone". His contemporary Barney Houghton while serving in France in WWI observed the use of Pyrethrum flowers being used with chalk and borax to control insects and brought this technology back with him, eventually establishing another iconic pest control company, Houghton & Byrne, that was taken over by the UK firm Rentokil. Jock Whiteman also started up in 1923; eventually his operation morphed into Amalgamated Pest Control.

All this work between the two world wars was underpinned by sound research into termite biology centred on CSIRO, in systematics by Gerald Hill and biology by Frank Gay. After WWII with many more operators joining the industry, the need for better training and industry supervision and regulation became apparent. Phil Hadlington of the Forestry Commission of NSW set up courses in Sydney leading to accreditation; he was joined by Ion Staunton who also established the germlings of the industry associations set up in NSW to get the house in order.

While all this was going on, research into termites in forestry was also gathering pace, particularly after WWII. Termite degrade of mill logs (particularly eucalypts) received more attention and the spectacular attack of tropical tree plantations in the Northern Territory by *Mastotermes darwiniensis* led to the development of Mirex baiting techniques and extensive field testing of timber species susceptibility; Tom Greaves, Bob Fox and Frank Gay were closely involved in this work.

Turning to the structure of the book, it divides some 230 years chronologically into eight periods starting with 1788-1800 and finally with 2000-2018. Each time-digest discusses developments in understanding termite biology and managing termite damage, and the often colourful people involved. The whole builds into a virtual *vade mecum* on the biology and social history of termite management in Australia - most appropriate for what is arguably the most social of insects. There is a most comprehensive bibliography covering several hundred references, organised into themes, for those wishing to delve further. Highly recommended to all those with an interest in the history of biological science and of industry development in Australia as well as forest historians; there is something for everybody here.

The authors were determined to produce the book in Australia and production is first class: they used high quality paper "not eaten by termites", clear large font text and excellent illustrations, printed and hard bound by Kingswood Press in Underwood, Brisbane.



Mark and Angela Fry, 2017. *On Splintered Rails: The Era of the Tasmanian Bush Loco 1873-1974. Volume 1*. Published by the authors, ISBN 978-0-9954448-8-1. Limited edition of 500 copies. 312 pages, 280 x 240mm, large format, hard cover with dust jacket, and soft cover; 271 photographs, 38 diagrams and

plans. Glossary, bibliography, references and index. Cost \$95 plus \$20 postage. Only available from the authors, [markfryoldina4@gmail.com](mailto:markfryoldina4@gmail.com).

Review by Peter Evans

This book is to be the first of several volumes to cover in detail every locomotive, rail tractor and mechanical contrivance used on Tasmania's logging and sawmilling tramways from 1873 to 1974.

This first volume is basically an introduction, and covers in six chapters historic forest harvesting operations in Tasmania, including the selection and falling of trees, haulage to log landings, timber tramway and bridge construction, rolling stock, sawmill layout, sawmill machinery and sawing sequences. A final chapter is an introduction to timber tramway locomotive types. The latter is a general introduction to what is promised in future volumes and covers steam and internal combustion locomotives, both conventional and conversions from other vehicles.

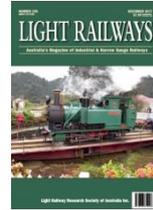
The photographs are myriad and many of fine quality, both duotone and colour, many never previously published, although some are reproduced a little dark. There are also some interesting engineering drawings from the Russell Allport archive, although most lack a useable scale. Of particular value are the large sections of oral history in the book, giving an insight to life working in the forest that cannot be obtained from any archive. It is hoped that this aspect of the research will be continued in future volumes.

If there is a drawback to this book, it is the lack of robust editing, especially in relation to grammar and punctuation. There are also a number of spelling mistakes and factual errors, of which the incorrect definition of a superficial foot is perhaps the most glaring example. Sometimes there is too much detail, and this results in lack of clarity. Large sections of text could have been replaced with a simple diagram. Captions too are often lifted straight from the text in the book instead of doing the job needed; to draw out the meaning in the photograph for the reader. The work is referenced, but these references are sometimes vague and, in some cases, will do little to help the reader seek further information.

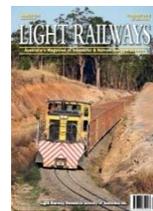
That said, this is a very impressive and well-presented first effort from Mark and Angela Fry. The quality of production, binding and the choice of paper are excellent. Profits from the very limited (500) first print run are being directed to 'The Kids' Cancer Project. Future volumes in the series are eagerly awaited. Recommended.

*Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways*, December 2017 (258) and February 2018. (259). Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN 0 727 8101. [www.lrrsa.org.au](http://www.lrrsa.org.au).

Two editions of *Light Railways* have appeared since our last newsletter, 258 and 259, both of which contain items of relevance to forest history.

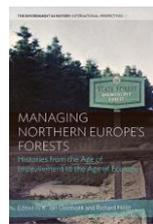


LR258 contains an article by Mark and Angela Fry on the locomotive built by engineer Andrew Buyers in 1912 for use at Chesterman & Coy's sawmill at Raminea in southern Tasmania. The article deals with the many changes occurring during the long life of this locomotive (in various guises) as experiments were made with improving the technology. In the Field Reports section there is mention of timber tramway wheel design, including a photograph of preserved examples.



LR259 contains Part 2 of an article by Ian McNeil on the Coffs Harbour Timber Company (part 1 was in LR251 in October 2016). This deals with the period 1912 to 1931 and the article contains detailed maps and many photographs of logging and tramway operations. Also included is an account of the shipping used to transport sawn timber to Sydney. There is also an article by Nick Anchen on Warburton (Victoria) timber worker Des Morrish, based on an interview undertaken in 2012. Des was a "high climber", rigging ropes for the Washington winch for high-lead logging, and some of Des's stories are included here. The article is well illustrated with photographs.

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K. Jan Oosthoek and Richard Hölzl (eds), 2018. *Managing Northern Europe's Forests: Histories from the Age of Improvement to the Age of Ecology*. Berghahn Books, Oxford. ISBN 9781785336003. 420pp. £92.00 (£46.00 until 30th April - code OOS003). URL:

[www.berghahnbooks.com/title/OosthoekManaging](http://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/OosthoekManaging).

From the publisher's notes.

Northern Europe was, by many accounts, the birthplace of much of modern forestry practice, and for hundreds of years the region's woodlands have played an outsize role in international relations, economic growth, and the development of national identity. Across eleven chapters, the contributors to this volume survey the histories of state forestry policy in Scandinavia, the Low Countries, Germany, Poland, and Great Britain from the early modern period to the present. Each explores the complex interrelationships of state-building, resource management, knowledge transfer, and trade over a period characterized by ongoing modernisation and evolving environmental awareness.