



Australian Forest History Society

Newsletter No.93
December 2024

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

The Importance of People and Their Stories

*"Forestry is not
about trees,
it's about people"*



Jack Westoby



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

*See Michael Bleby's article, "The Importance of
People and Their Stories", pp 3-6.*



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Membership of the Australian Forest History Society (AFHS) Inc is A\$25 a year for Australian and New Zealand addressees or A\$15 a year for students. For other overseas addressees, it is A\$30.

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NEXT ISSUE

The newsletter is normally published three times a year, with the occasional special issue. The next issue should be out in April 2025.

Input is always welcome.

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

Contributions may be edited.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The year ends with a changing of the guard, Juliana Lazzari having stepped down as president after four years and Kevin Frawley stepping up. Kevin is a founding member of the society and recalls being at the first informal meetings about Australian forest history held in the ANU Forestry School in the 1980s. His first report as president is on page 19, along with Juliana's final report. Juliana continues to be on the committee and is also the public officer.

The future of the society remains a concern, although this is not something new. In December 2001, for example, our newsletter reported that it would be a topic of discussion at our conference in February 2002 – see foresthistor.org.au/newsletter/afhsnewsletter31.pdf (pp6-7). We obviously survived that storm, but the problems have not gone away.

Onto some positive things, this newsletter features some great articles from members, including Michael Bleby "The Importance of People and Their Stories", Michael Roche "A Message on New Zealand Wood", and Peter McHugh "First Fry's Hut – Howqua Valley", as well as Ian Bevege's lengthy review of Jack Bradshaw's new book, *Forestry Settlements in the South West of Western Australia* (two members in one hit there). We also have two further tributes to our founding president John Dargavel.

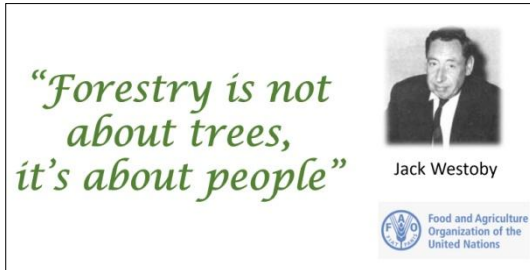
Peter Evans will be editing the next issue which is due out in April 2025 (2025! Where has the time gone?). As we always say, contributions are always welcome, big or small. As Michael Bleby says in his article, "It's the people who make the stories and who have the stories; and it's the stories that we need to share as it's from the stories that we learn about life."

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE AND THEIR STORIES

By Michael Bleby OAM

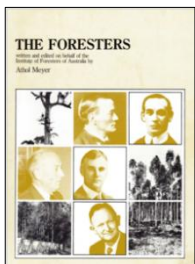
Author's note: "Forestry, Art, History and Creativity" was the title of a session held at the Forestry Australia Symposium held in Ballarat in October 2024. My topic as one of the invited speakers was "The importance of people and their stories". The challenge was to enthuse the listeners about the importance of capturing stories in the professional memory so they are not lost. The essence of the talk is what follows.

It was the FAO Forester Jack Westoby who famously said "Forestry is not about trees, it's about people". Those of us who have had long careers in the forestry game understand the truth of that sentiment. Although he was actually on about how trees and forests serve the needs of society, his quote is very appropriate when we come to the really interesting stories worth recording to become part of our history. It's the interactions with people that make up our strong memories, and it's these yarns that add to the social narratives of our profession in a valuable way.



Our working lives are full of characters. The bush is full of characters. Our forest workers, fallers, contractors, sawmillers, environmentalists, are all characters and so the challenge is to record some of the history that we have been part of, that needs to be set down and become part of our professional memory before it evaporates.

We all have our own possible contributions. You might do some writing, create a book or a blog, or maybe you can add to our oral history in some way. What follows is something of the efforts of others, along with my personal attempts to do this along with some examples to whet the appetite, to get your own story telling happening.



My first involvement in forest history came about when the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA – now Forestry Australia) produced a publication called *The Foresters* in 1985. It was written by Athol Meyer during Evan Rolley's time as president.

There was someone from each state who was the divisional researcher, and I was the South Australian representative. The well-illustrated book records the life and work of five early notable foresters: C.E. Lane-Poole, N.W. Jolly, E.H.F. Swain, S.L. Kessell, and M.R. Jacobs. I recall doing some research on Swain because he investigated the pulp resource for APM in the South Australian radiata plantations. His inventory work

has had a lasting effect on managing the radiata plantations in the region ever since. Max Jacobs, another of the five foresters in the book, came from South Australia as well, and his contribution to forestry education as head of the Australian Forestry School at Yarralumla is well known by many. These gentlemen were all real characters, and the book records not only the work they did and their contributions, but the fascinating interactions and power politics that took place as forestry and the education of foresters grew of age in Australia.

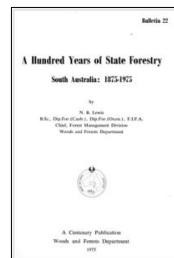
To illustrate what I've just referred to, let me from quote Athol Meyer's opening paragraphs about Doc Jacobs.

"He was remembered with affection and respect by those he taught and those he worked with. That in itself is something of an achievement, because antagonisms and bitterness were much a part of relationships in the upper echelons of Australian forestry in those and earlier years – perhaps an inevitable outcome when strong men imbued with their own ideas and in positions of power, have to deal with each other. Jacobs earned the respect because of his personal qualities but also because of his achievements in research, as a teacher, as the Principal of the Australian Forestry School, and as a spokesman at home and overseas for Australian Forestry, as one who shaped national policies on Forestry after the formation of the Australian Forestry Council."



and earlier years – inevitable outcome when strong men imbued with their own ideas and in positions of power, have to deal with each other. Jacobs earned the respect because of his personal qualities

So here Athol Meyer has captured the nuances between the personalities that shape our industry at the time.



Let's move to another publication that I'm familiar with, which records the people involved. In the centenary publication by Norm Lewis *A Hundred Years of State Forestry South Australia: 1875-1975* more than 50% of the pages of text concern the "Forestry People".

He talks about the founders – mentioning G.W. Goyder the Surveyor-General, the politicians of the day who had the foresight to pass legislation, and John Ednie Brown (pictured right) who came from Scotland to be the first Conservator of Forests.



Norm records the list of Conservators over the first 100 years and the issues they faced, the notable foresters like N.W. Jolly (pictured left) who was the state's first Rhodes Scholar, and many other foresters by name whose contribution was significant.

He then goes on to list the forestry families, where there were many father and son contributions to the establishment of the state's

plantation estate. I'm fairly confident that it wasn't just South Australia where there have been long term family forestry connections. It wouldn't be uncommon for several generations of a family to be part of the work force in a particular region or a particular state forest.

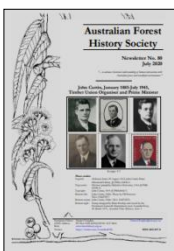
The sawmillers get a significant mention as it was they who solved the conversion problems of the day. Their vision, their innovation, their risk taking, their adoption of new technology, solved the problems like kiln drying, the introduction of gangsaws, utilising smaller diameter logs from thinnings – that would all be lost – if it hadn't been set down in books like this.

The nurserymen get a section, as do the logging contractors, and of course the forestry women who contributed through the men they married, often living in primitive housing and in remote locations, and raising families. The women were often key employees in nurseries and sawmills, office duties, and of course in country town community life as teachers, nurses, in retail and so on.

Norm also takes the opportunity to record the various Ministers of Forests who, as politicians, had influence on industry development. He records the people who were honoured with awards, and scholarships such as the Russell Grimwade scholars who studied forestry at Oxford, and ends with a section on Long Service, recording those with 25 years or more of continuous service to the Woods and Forests Department. A thing that we note in this day and age is far less likely to occur.



The Australian Forest History Society is a small but important organisation whose charter is "to advance historical understanding of human interactions with Australian forest and woodland environments".



As such its newsletter often contains articles, reports, references to publications, etc that add to Australia's forest social history. A quick example I found in the July 2020 newsletter (no. 80) had an account of Prime Minister John Curtin and his pre-parliament involvement as secretary of the Victorian Timber

Workers' Union and editor of its newspaper *The Timber Worker*.

In fact every edition is full of articles and references to forestry people from the well-known, the less known and the forgotten. May I commend the Australian Forest History Society to you if you are interested. Just go to their website for details.

A talk on this topic cannot exist without reference to forester colleagues from Western Australia such as Roger Underwood and Jack Bradshaw. Roger has been and still is a prolific writer and publisher. In the preface to one of his earlier books, *Leaves from the Forest – Stories from the Lives of West Australian Foresters*, he writes – and I quote:

I have found that most Australians have only the vaguest notion about the sort of people foresters are, or the sort of work that they do. The public concept of the profession rarely extends beyond timber cutting or firefighting. I have long wanted to redress this.

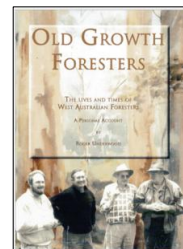
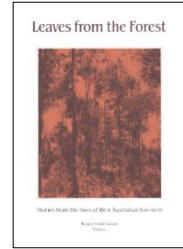
He goes on:

I have always felt that the life of the forester is a story worth telling. The work is often dramatic, highly varied, tightly interwoven with the lives of countless other men and women, and played out against the backdrop of our superb forests and woodlands.

Roger's philosophy is that there is an obligation on every generation and every profession to leave some record of their work and lives – as he says:

If only as a footnote to the social history of the times.

In a further book of Roger Underwood's, titled *Old Growth Foresters: The Lives and Times of West Australian Foresters*, he describes in the preface three distinct purposes in setting down the stories of interesting forestry people. First to produce what he called a "pen-picture", a glimpse of often complex personalities, as seen through his eyes and reflecting the times in which he lived and worked.

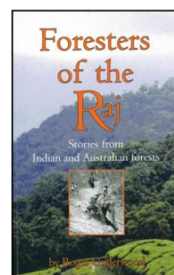


Second, he aims to record episodes of his own experience as an Australian forester in the second half of the 20th century and for the interest of his grandchildren.

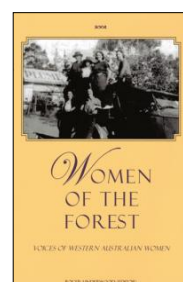
And third, he mentions an unexpected outcome of all this. In the case of Western Australia, he says:

This is the emergence of another story altogether, that of forestry itself in WA during these years. They were turbulent and fascinating times.

He goes on to describe the great changes that took place over some 30 years where public interest in the forests shifted dramatically. The original Forestry Department's times, places and culture fast fade from memory and will never be seen again, and so the stories become a significant historic record.



If you are interested, check out some of his other publications such as *Foresters of the Raj* – a book of portraits some heroes of international forestry and their proteges who were the fathers of Australian forestry, like Norman Jolly and Charles Lane-Poole.



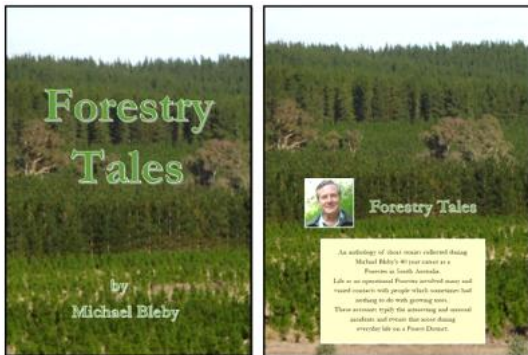
Then, not to forget the women and their stories there is his book *Women of the Forest: Voices of Western Australian Women* where he pays tribute to the women of courage and resilience who

faced big challenges. They were the women of forestry families, the wives, the daughters, and sisters, supporting what he calls the social fabric of country towns and isolated bush settlements. They also worked on the fire lookouts, in the office and nursery, but it was not until the late 1970s that the first women foresters and rangers appeared.

You obviously can't keep a good writer down as Roger continues to have an active blog called "Forest Leaves: Stories about trees, forests, bushfires and books" www.forestleaves.blog where he continues to add stories for all to enjoy. We are so lucky to have people like Roger for their enormous contribution to our social history.

I spoke earlier about where we can find information and stories about our past leaders, but it's not just them that we should show an interest in. It needs to encompass all of the people and characters that we come across.

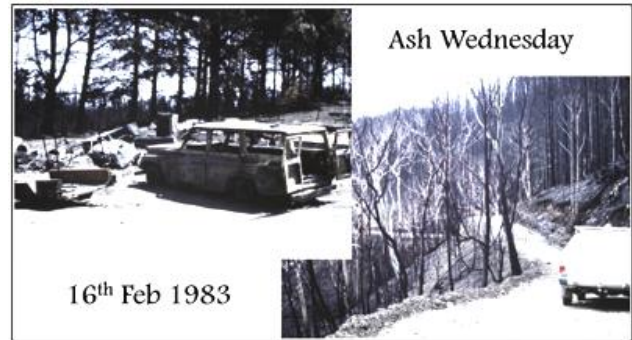
I'll give you some more everyday examples from my efforts in putting together my book of *Forestry Tales*.



My writing motivation, in part, like Roger's, was originally to set down something of my life as a forester for **my** grandchildren. However, the project grew into a publication which has led to even more stories.

In my chapter about fire towers I have known, there is a story that goes like this. The Mount Edward fire tower observer was sending his reports to the Mount Burr Office and because it was the stubble burning season, the District Forester had instructed him to report absolutely every smoke sighting and let those in the office decide on its importance. So this particular day he reported fire number 1 bearing so and so, distance such and such. Then a minute or so later, fire number 1 on a slightly different bearing, and then again a little later, fire number 1 on a different bearing again. Quite puzzled the District Forester called him back – "what's going on?" He replied, "you wanted to know every smoke sighting – there is a steam train running down the railway line!"

I think that stories about fire tower observers will disappear. As smoke recognition cameras and AI detection systems become more ubiquitous, the opportunity for stories is declining fast. Perhaps the stories will just change to relate the human side of whatever processes of the day might be.



From my Ash Wednesday fire story it was the chap from the Cudlee Creek crew who said to me "Where do we go in the morning boss?" who spoke of the reality of the situation. Their Cudlee Creek depot had just been destroyed, sheds, store, vehicles all gone. In other words, the usual place to start their working day, was no longer!

I set down some accounts of the forest being used for military training. On one occasion my wife had to go outside our forest house to investigate the loud sound of engines, when an Army twin rotor Chinook helicopter did a low flyover the headquarters. She told me afterwards she could clearly see the faces of those standing in the chopper's open doorway. Later, when talking to the exercise commander, he said with a grin, "We don't fly that low!"

It would be sad if some of the bush ingenuity stories disappeared. Our regular fixed wing aerial fertiliser pilot was quite a character himself and often needed a small smoky fire at the airstrip so he could monitor the wind strength and direction and any changes through the day.

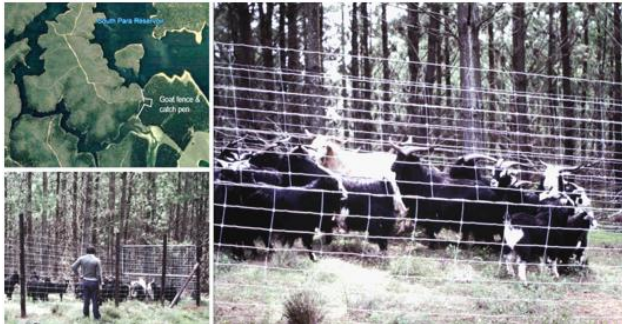
On one occasion we urgently needed to get the fire going and having given up smoking, no one had any matches. The resourcefulness and experience of the pilot's offside loader driver came the fore. He took a short piece of number 8 fencing wire, a rag dipped in aviation gasoline (avgas) and, using the spark from the truck battery, produced a flame that did the trick!

The catching and destruction of feral goats was one of our tasks when I was District Forester at Mount Crawford in the Mount Lofty Ranges. On one occasion I decided to ask for volunteers of city workers from our Adelaide office to join us for a day in the bush. I needed extra people to help flush goats on a peninsula of the South Para Reservoir into a catching pen we had constructed.

We had planned a couple of destinations for the carcasses. A few would go as feed to the Cudlee Creek Wildlife Park at as it then was, while the majority would go to a large burial at a pit we had dug with the D4 in a section of the forest.

On the day, I explained to the Adelaide office staff what it was we were trying to achieve and why. They would travel out in 4WDs to the end of the peninsula and, in conjunction with the forest staff, spread out into a human chain and march together through the scrub flushing the goats in front of the line, towards the fence and catch pen. All went well and as the line approached

the funnel race the goats had nowhere to go but into the pen. It was clear that the exercise was going to be a success and eventually all present were in close proximity to the anxious goats. They were of various colour markings and that distinctive feral goat smell pervaded the area.



What next? Well, I said thank you very much to the visitors from Adelaide office and indicated they were now free to go, as we had work to do and needed to get on with it. But I had badly miscalculated on what happened next. A few of the Adelaide staff not being used to the ways of the bush, were now curious about the fate of the goats, and they became quite upset when they realised that the goats were about to be shot. I hadn't counted on this and found myself doing some unplanned consoling and explaining that this would be carried out humanely and necessarily for the good of the environment. They left before the next round of action which involved our marksman, the front end loader and the tip truck.

So there are a few examples of the everyday yarns and the people who make up the social history that I feel we should capture.

It's the people who make the stories and who have the stories; and it's the stories that we need to share as it's from the stories that we learn about life.

I just encourage you to think about who **you** have come across, the characters **you** have met or had dealings with, and then set something down – as it is they who potentially make for the interesting and enjoyable tales that go to make up a really important part of the history of our fantastic profession and industry.

FOREST HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



The association was formed in March 1982 although its newsletter has been published since December 1981. All issues are available at <https://fhabc.org/past-newsletters>. It has published or co-published histories of several major programs of the BC Forest Service –see <https://fhabc.org/publications> for more information.



FOSSILISED FOREST AT BADGER BEACH

By Len Gillett

This article was first published in October 2024 by the North-Eastern Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club www.netasfieldnats.com.au/fossilised-forest-at-badger-beach. It is reprinted with the permission of the club. The article on the website includes some additional photos.

Both Yahoo! News and the ABC also carried reports.

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/ancient-world-discovered-on-remote-aussie-beach-after-wild-storms-magnificent-070254553.html>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-08/tas-storm-surge-uneartths-petrified-forest-on-tasmanian-beach/104440088>

Editor's note: Badger Beach is in Narawntapu National Park on Tasmania's north coast. Formerly called Asbestos Range National Park, Narawntapu is pronounced "Na-ron-ta-poo" according to the ranger I asked when Juliana Lazgari and I were there in January 2024.

Badger Head is a lovely coastal walk – part of the Narawntapu NP traverse accessed N.W. of York Town. However, there is an added attraction currently on the beach at low tide.

Recent storms have revealed the remains of an ancient forest of trees there considered "elders" by Tasmania's aboriginals. One estimate suggests the ancient forest could be 40,000 years old. Another expert, Prof Jordan from Utas, says they are *at least* 8,000 years old, and agrees they could be "tens of thousands" of years old. Their unearthing through wild weather storm surges triggering erosion, relates to our weather systems becoming more extreme. Our sea levels are rising through climate change. However, while rising sea levels are a current concern, they are fairly inconsequential when you think you could walk from Melbourne to Tasmania 12,000 years ago.

Many of the trees are clumped together, resembling the trunk structures of melaleuca wattle. The ancient wood appears fresh and almost still alive as the structures sit frozen on the beach. Parks & Wildlife initially reported the discovery as a "fossilised forest". It is now thought that "preserved" might be a better description. That is an earlier step in the fossilisation process. Instead of the stumps becoming stone, they are largely maintained in their original condition, keeping a wooden appearance and texture. However, some of the remnants may be partially petrified meaning that some of the roots may have grafted to the rocks akin to fossilisation.

Underlying the preserved wood is also a strange, almost mystifying, substance. While it appears to be grey mud rivulets rising out of the sand, the texture is yielding – almost like plasticine. It's like stepping back in time.

It should be noted though that the wild weather storm surges that washed away regular sand and debris from Badger Beach provide just a brief window of opportunity to see this interesting petrification. It will all soon be covered again by tides and sand in the coming weeks.

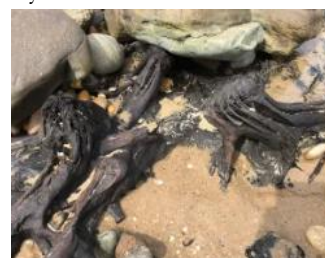


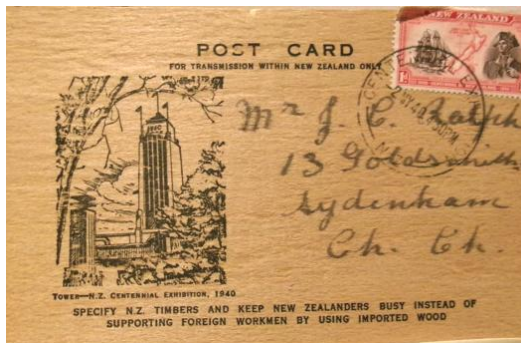
Photo by Len Gillett (used by permission)

A MESSAGE ON NEW ZEALAND WOOD

By Michael Roche

Wooden postcards as novelty items have been used to mark occasions of significance, to advertise products, demonstrate technologies or just for fun and amusement. One example that I acquired second hand relates to the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition – measuring 5⁹/₁₆" x 3⁵/₈" x 1¹/₁₆", postmarked 2 May 1940 and sent to an address in Christchurch. This anniversary marked 100 years since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the incorporation of New Zealand into the British Empire. There was an array of publications, events, memorials, re-enactments, postage stamps and, not least, a large exhibition pavilion near the present-day Wellington airport, visited by 2.6 million over the course of 6 months (noting that New Zealand's population was 1.6 million in 1939). Government departments including the State Forest Service and companies had displays and memorabilia such as the wooden postcard in the exhibition hall.

The front of the card features a sketch of the 155 feet main tower at the exhibition complex. The capstan speaks, in the aftermath of the Great Depression, to economic self-sufficiency – "Specify N.Z. Timbers and keep New Zealanders busy instead of supporting foreign workmen by using imported wood".



The reverse side features an impressionistic sketch of a family home with hillsides and a few trees and includes the slogan "There is a New Zealand Timber for every purpose – use it!" It is possible to examine these claims and find them wanting – for instance New Zealand relatively speaking lacked hardwoods and depended on Australian imports. However, it was the "small print" at the bottom of the reverse side that caught my attention – "Printed on plywood manufactured by the Ellis Veneer Co. Ltd., Mananui". Having once published a 466 page book on forestry in New Zealand without once mentioning veneers or plywood, now is the time to make amends.



The "Ellis Veneer Co." meant nothing but Ellis did as one of the founders of the sawmilling firm of Ellis and Burnand Company (E&B)¹. Some further hunting around identified the beginnings of commercial veneer manufacture in New Zealand around 1903. That places it 8 years after a timber conference of sawmillers and state interests that recognised that a "timber famine" was a real possibility and led to the establishment of a Forestry Branch of the Lands Department entirely given over to experimenting with exotic plantation species.

Reducing waste and adding value to logs currently destined only for firewood, the pioneering Auckland Veneer and Timber Company established in 1903 using US equipment produced attractive veneers of mottled and plain puriri, totara, wavy kauri, and rewarewa. One of its directors and shareholders was Tudor Atkinson, son of a former premier, who was heavily involved in other timber enterprises notably the Taupo Totara Timber Company (1901) and later May Morn Estates (NZ) Ltd (1912). The Auckland company sent rimu doors and mottled puriri panels to the Colonial Products Exhibition at Liverpool (UK) in 1905 and won a gold medal for their ornamental cabinet doors and veneers at the Indian (and Colonial) Exhibition in London in 1905 (Local and General, 1905). The firm also sent samples to the New Zealand International Exhibition in Christchurch in 1906-07. Industrial veneer production appears to have developed in the US Pacific north-west in the early 1900s making the Auckland company an early adopter of a new technology, albeit on a very small scale. The company sought to develop an export market with more high-end timber products – New Zealand sawn timbers could not be profitably sold in the UK. Auckland Veneer and Timber ultimately had limited success and was wound up around 1919.

In 1911, J.W. (John William) Ellis (1852-1918) set up his own veneer plant – the Ellis Veneer Company. British-born Ellis initially worked for an Auckland stationer before, entrepreneurial qualities to the fore, he became a storekeeper and owner of a trading schooner. A sawmilling partnership with J.H.G. (Harry) Burnand (1850-1919), an experienced engineer, dated from around 1891. Through his wife, a relative of Rewi Maniapoto, Ellis secured timber concessions on Māori land from the Māori King Tawhiao around Mananui, Ōtorohanga and Mangapehi. E&B was formed in 1905. (The Melbourne-based Kauri Timber Company (KTC) was a large shareholder, giving it a means of surviving once kauri was milled out (see Roche, et al., 1993).) E&B became one of the largest firms operating mills along the main trunk railway line in the central North Island in the early 20th century, eventually making prefabricated houses. By 1905 they had also opened a joinery factory in Hamilton where they relocated their head office.

E&B and Ellis Veneer Company were separate firms, the latter registered as a private company with a small nominal capital of £6000 and entirely owned by

¹ The article on E&B in Wikipedia is detailed and accurate, and also includes a helpful map of mill locations – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellis_and_Burnand.

J.W. Ellis, but in functional terms both enterprises were closely linked on a shared site at Mananui. Ellis was later a director of insurance agents Green and Colebrook Company, Wilson's Portland Cement Company, coach builders Pomeroy and Company Ltd, and Butler Bros. Ltd – the latter being major South Island sawmillers closely connected to the KTC – and at the time of his death was mayor of Hamilton (Obituary Mr J.W. Ellis M.B.E., 1918).

Ellis' focus was on the domestic market. At the time New Zealand was importing all its veneer requirements, including three-ply from Siberia. Plywood was sought after in furniture making because it did not shrink. Ellis secured rights to 600 acres of timber in the Piopioa Survey District near Taumarunui on the main trunk railway line early in 1911 and rapidly pushed ahead installing equipment imported from the USA (Local and General, 1911). The plant was claimed to be the only one of its kind in Australasia – readers may be able to undermine this claim. The production process was novel and outlined in considerable detail by the reporter for the *Wanganui Herald* in the article "A New Industry Veneering Works":

Selected logs only are used, which are cut up into 6ft lengths, or less, according to the sizes required, and placed in a huge vat and either steamed or boiled, according to the class of timber used. After this they are placed on a kind of huge lathe, being firmly gripped at each end, which lathe rotates and moves forward until the log comes into contact with another machine containing a knife, capable of such minute adjustment that it can cut veneers from as thin as 63 to the inch up to 2 to the inch. The veneer is cut in a manner similar to that in which lead pencils are sharpened by the patent pencil sharpeners, excepting that the knife cuts evenly along the whole length of the log, instead of pointing the end, as in the case of the pencil sharpeners. Following upon this, the veneer, by automatic means, passes to another machine, which cuts it into the required widths. It is afterwards dried by being placed between steam-heated plates (a very complex piece of machinery). Upon being dried, the thin sheets are made up into boards of a required thickness—chiefly 3 and 5 ply. In the case of the three-ply the bottom layer will be placed with the grain running in one direction, the middle layer will have the grain running at right angles, and the top one in the same direction as the bottom one. With the five-ply, which will be made only from the more valuable kinds of timber, only the top and bottom layers will consist of this particular timber, the three in between being of a commoner kind, all, however, being placed with their grain running the reverse way to each other. In making up the veneers into boards they are first of all placed on an automatic spreader, which spreads over each layer a patent waterproof cement, which, when dry, is capable of resisting being placed in boiling water for a period of 12 hours before being sufficiently dissolved to enable the layers to come apart again. The various layers are now placed in a huge press capable of a pressure of 300tons, each series of layers having paper placed round their edges to prevent any overflow of the cement from sticking them together. When sufficient pressure has been used the boards are

ready for manufacture by cabinetmakers, furnituremakers, etc. The veneers are also used for making boxes, baskets, strawberry and other fruit boxes, and baskets of all descriptions.

Some idea as to the huge and costly machinery used in the various processes can perhaps be gathered when it is mentioned that the 300-ton press alone cost £2000 in America, where the whole of the plant has been obtained.

Ellis was quick to explore various market opportunities, sending examples of improved light and compact strawberry boxes to Auckland fruit growers late in 1911 (Fruitgrowers' Association, 1911). Over the next decade the company expanded production and distribution throughout New Zealand. In 1917 they advertised for supplies of pukatea for the veneer and plywood plant at Mananui. The firm developed its own brands of "Silverlite" and the more nationalistically named "Dominion" plywood by 1918 (Late Advertisements, 1918). Its three-ply "Silverlite" was produced from kahikatea, treated against borer and could be stained to any colour. "Dominion" three-ply, their "biggest line", was manufactured from matai and described as having a similar grain to the increasingly scarce kauri and ideal for panelling. By 1920 it was producing a third named line "NZ Red Pine Plywood" (the old settler name for rimu) which it promoted for high grade panelling work. During WWI the company also produced several millions of partly plywood cheese crates per year. Previously these were constructed out of kahikatea – "white pine" – favoured for its non-tainting properties but now in short supply and subject to an export ban (with exemptions possible for a trade with Australia). The New Zealand government had signed bulk purchase agreements with the UK government for meat and dairy products. Indeed, the company even sought an exemption, successfully, from military service for employee Robert Patterson, who they characterised as the only staff member able to operate the lathes properly. Enlistments and conscription had meant only two of the 24 pre-war staff remained, replacements being girls and older men (Military Exemptions, 1918).

After WWI, the company experimented with *Pinus radiata* veneers (Sawmilling Section, 1919). By 1921 they produced 477,000 square feet of plywood, 3.7 million scaleboards and 1.6 million strawberry boxes (Simpson, 1973, 314). In 1922 it was with difficulty sourcing tawa from rival KTC (Valder to Entrican, 23 February 1922, R17278756). Writing in 1923, Alex Entrican, then Forest Service Engineer-in-Forest Products, noted that the Ellis Veneer Company at Mananui was making plywoods out of rimu, white pine (kahikatea), matai, and tanekaha. He also observed that most plywood continued to be imported and that further possibilities existed for a large-scale local industry (Entrican, 1923). New entrants did eventually appear – KDV Boxes Ltd in 1939 and, in 1942, New Zealand Plywoods Ltd (owned by Fletcher Holdings). Auckland sawmillers and timber merchants Henderson and Pollard (established in 1896), also began manufacture that same year (Simpson, 1973). For Entrican, the advantage local plywood enjoyed over

imports was that it was borer resistant, being treated during manufacture. The other reason for his interest in veneers and plywood was that it made use of material that might otherwise go to waste.

Company advertisements in the late 1920s claimed that "richly grained rimu" was cheaper than imported Oregon plywood, that properly seasoned it did not suffer from shrinkage (by implication Oregon did), that it was suitable for walls and ceilings, and could be easily stained or coloured as requested at the firm's Hamilton factory (N.Z. Plywoods for Walls and Ceilings, 1928). E&B price lists from 1932 listed four classes of plywood – "Heart", "Medium", "First", and "Furniture" in that order as well as the proclamation – "Plywood is manufactured from N.Z. timbers for N.Z. conditions by N.Z. workmen using N.Z. capital - support your own industries" (Plywood Price List, 1932. R17278756). The firm faced some competition from imports of Oregon from North America and cottonwood from Siberia.

By 1937 the situation was sufficiently improved for a new plywood factory to be built beside the veneer mill at Mananui to produce decorative rimu and totara veneers for an emerging market in interior house panels, doors and tabletops.

There were disappointments however; in 1939 for instance, over imported walnut panelling being selected for a new government post office in Hamilton and other panelling manufactured out of imported wood by rival firm Henderson and Pollard being used in another post office. That same year the Sawmillers' Association protested to the Minister of Industry and Commerce about quantities of low-quality Luan Plywood being imported from Japan. This exchange provided details of Ellis Veneer's production – 1.2 million feet of plywood for 1938 at about 100,000 feet per month but having doubled in 1939 to 200,000 feet per month. When new equipment was operating, this was expected to increase to 300,000 feet per month (Seed to Industry and Commerce, 27 September 1939. R17278755).

In 1938 plywood imports totalled about 5 million feet and local production about 1.25 million feet. In terms of value, imports from the top six countries accounted for 92.7% – Australia (51.1%), Japan (14.9%), Canada (13.6%) USSR (5.5%), Finland (4.7%) and USA (2.9%). The case was made for a reduction in the quantity of licensed plywood imports for 1939-40. Ellis Veneer Company, as part of this negotiation, further stated that of its 1.25 million feet, 37.5% was furniture quality, 54.6% first class for construction, and 7.9% in heart and medium grade for special purposes.

The output by brand was overwhelmingly "Rimu" (95.9%), with "Dominion" a mere 1.2% and "Silverlite" 2.9%. They also indicated small quantities of *Pinus radiata*, tawa, and *Nothofagus* veneers were produced. Other veneers were used for fruit punnets and cheeseboxes (Chalmers to Industry and Commerce, 12 October 1939. R17278755).

The wooden postcard referred to here is made of rimu, though with the passage of time it has faded from a deep red to more of a pale yellow. The postcard's plea about

keeping New Zealanders "busy instead of supporting foreign workmen" makes sense against company efforts to secure more of the local market by simultaneously doubling output and by securing import restriction. In 1959-60 New Zealand Plywood (South Island) Ltd acquired the Ellis Veneer Company. This sale was illustrative of a complex web of interlocking shareholdings and directorates – KTC holding 51% of E&B shares had insisted on the sale to New Zealand Plywood (South Island) Ltd – in which it also had a 50% stake, the rest with Fletcher Holdings because it was dissatisfied with E&B's running of the veneer operation (Plywood Manufacturing Operation – Ellis Veneer Company. R20064714). E&B survived until it was acquired by Fletcher Holdings in 1980 and rebranded as "Placemakers" thereafter refocussed as a chain of building materials and hardware stores. The postcard remains an artifact from a time when indigenous forests, and rimu in particular, were the mainstay of New Zealand timber production.

Appendix: Trade and botanical names

kahikatea (<i>Dacrycarpus dacrydioides</i>)	rimu (<i>Dacrydium cupressinum</i>)
kauri (<i>Agathis australis</i>)	tawa (<i>Beilschmiedia tawa</i>)
matai (<i>Prumnopitys taxifolia</i>)	totara (<i>Podocarpus totara</i>)
puriri (<i>Vitex lucens</i>)	rewarewa (<i>Knightsia excelsa</i>)
pukatea (<i>Laurelia novae-zelandiae</i>)	tanekaha (<i>Phyllocladus trichomanoides</i>)

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FIRST FRY'S HUT – HOWQUA VALLEY

By Peter McHugh

This article is supplied by the author for publication in the AFHS newsletter. It is published (with additional photos and illustrations) on Victoria's Forests & Bushfire Heritage website at <https://victoriasforests.bushfireheritage.com/2024/10/20/frys-hut-howqua-hills>.

James (Jim) Fry was born in 1852 and worked as a carrier bringing supplies over treacherous tracks to several gold mining companies in the remote mountains east of Mansfield during the early 1870s.

The former manager's house (c.1874) from the Great Rand Mine had been left abandoned and was shifted from nearby Martin's Gap by bullock team and rebuilt on the Howqua River flats in about 1897. Jim acquired the building which was clad with corrugated iron, rather than logs or split timbers, while fossicking for gold and lived there with his wife, Mary Agnes Wheeler, and the couple's two children, who are said to have ridden ponies to the Merrijig school.

Frederick (Fred) Samuel Fry was born in Mansfield on 14 July 1895 as one of 17 children and was Jim's nephew. Fred left school when he was eight and mastered his many bushcraft skills while working with the Hoskins family at Jamieson, earning 10 shillings per week plus food and lodgings.

Like his uncle Jim before him, Fred worked a team of draft horses hauling supplies to the Woods Point and Gaffney's Creek goldfields until he was superseded by roads and motor vehicles. He then took a job on the Wonnangatta Station near Dargo for Arthur Phillips and Geoff Ritche.

When his uncle Jim died, aged 83 on 26 March 1935, Fred moved into the old mine manager's house on the Howqua Flats to live with his Aunt Mary. He later inherited the house when she died in 1939, aged 74.

Fred was then joined by his older brother, Stephen (Steve) John Fry, who had been working on the railways. Together, Fred and Steve did some gold prospecting, worked as stockmen, as roustabouts, as guides for more adventurous anglers, and as Forest Rangers (Fireguards) cutting tracks for the Forests Commission of Victoria (FCV). They also packed salt for the Lands Department which was used to kill noxious weeds.

In 1942, the Forests Commission supplied Fred with a newfangled RC-16B radio to communicate back to Mansfield. It was powered by heavy dry cell batteries and had a long antenna wire strung up in the trees.

Fred was a notable bushman and had built several unique huts in the valley including Ritchie's, Ashwin's, Gardner's, Pickering's, Bindaree and Helen Schusters'. He had his own distinctive design of hand-split, drop-timber walls. He rolled the heavy roof poles up a temporary ramp and into place over cribbed-end trusses using a horse and chain to create a long centre ridge.

By the late 1940s, Fred's old mine manager's house was just about ready to collapse after being eaten by termites.

Fred built the current hut at some stage between 1948 and 1951 – a report in *The Sun Week-End Magazine* from 5 July 1947 describes Fred and Steve living in the original mine manager's hut but indicating that a new structure was planned.

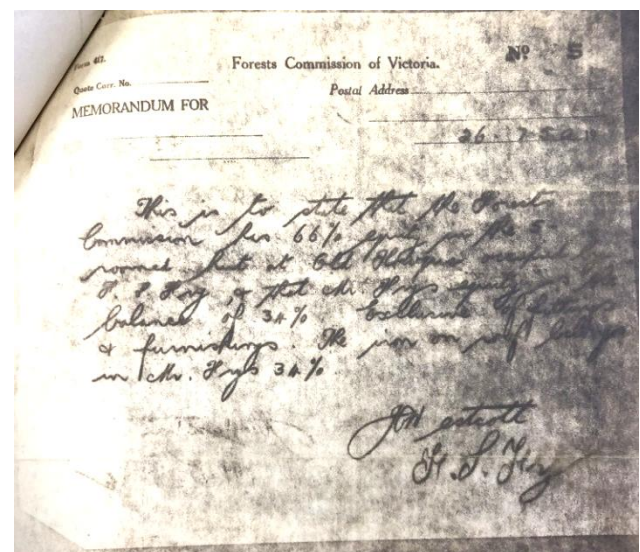


*Fry's Hut was built sometime between 1948-1951.
 Source: Victorian High-Country Huts Association*

Fred salvaged most of the old timber and iron from the original building and scavenged additional materials from old mining ruins scattered around the valley. Steve Fry, Harry Norris and Charlie Clark all helped with the construction. It's assumed that the new hut was built close to the old 1897 mine manager's house.

Fred also built a flying fox across the river to the old Howqua township where he owned some blocks of land and where there were a few holiday shacks. The flying fox was always a delight to visitors. It was restored in 1972 but removed in about 2004.

Jim Westcott was the District Forester at Mansfield between 1940 and 1951. Jim negotiated an agreement with Fred Fry on behalf of the Forests Commission, dated 26 July 1950, which gave Fred 34% equity in his new hut, with the FCV holding the remaining 66%. Oddly, part of Fred's share included the roof sheeting iron.



The unusual agreement dated 26 July 1950 between Fred and Jim Westcott reads – "This is to state that the Forests Commission has 66% equity in the five roomed hut at Old Howqua occupied by F.S. Fry and that Mr Fry's equity is the balance of the 34%. The iron roof belongs in Mr Fry's 34%. Signed."

This is a very unusual tenure arrangement, normally private buildings on state forest were issued with an annual licence, or permissive occupancy, and a rental fee was paid.

But it certainly would have been in the Commission's interests to have Fred living in the remote Howqua Valley. Maybe the FCV contributed labour or building materials towards it, remembering that there were severe post-war shortages at the time. We will never know.

Why Fred built his hut on Crown land rather than one of his private allotments across the river in the old Howqua township is also a puzzle.

The house plans, dated June 1951, describe the new building as Patrol Hut – FCV building number B236.

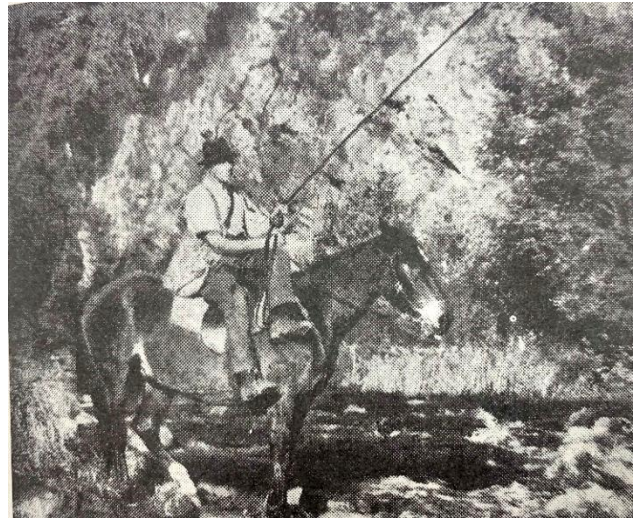
The replacement building had five rooms with a big verandah facing the river and a skillion roof at the back. Two rooms had plank floors, one with an earth floor and the other two rooms had T&G pine flooring. The roof was recycled corrugated iron over Malthoid paper and the walls were made using Fred's characteristic horizontal "drop slabs" of wood. There were also several casement windows.

Joe Morley graduated from the Victorian School of Forestry at Creswick in December 1948 and, a short time later, in October 1949, led a Forests Commission assessment team into the remote mountains east of Mansfield. The crew took an unreliable TD-18 bulldozer, pack horses, an ex-army Blitz truck and M3 White scout car, as well as a Land Rover.

While searching for timber resources, they constructed a rough track over Mount Stirling from King Saddle to Stanleys Name Gap and then back down various spurs to Bindaree Hut on the Howqua River. They lived like dingos and travelled on horseback and used many huts as basecamps, including Fred's.

Fred's brother Steve died at Healesville in 1963, aged 75, leaving Fred to live a solitary existence for his remaining years in the Howqua Valley, although he had a steady stream of visitors including foresters, fisherman, bushwalkers and Geelong Grammar students from the Timbertop campus. Fred's life formed the basis of the character Billy Slim in Neville Shute's 1952 novel *The Far Country*.

Fred was an expert trout fisherman and often tossed a line while sitting in the middle of the chilly Howqua River on his horse, "Flourbag". When he rode to Merrijig for supplies, Fred was known to be fond of a drink or two and his trusty horse would bring him home safely in the night.



*Fred fishing for trout in the Howqua River on the back of "Flourbag", The Sun Week-End Magazine, 5 July 1947.
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/279226389>*

The Forests Commission inherits Fry's Hut – 1971

Over the decades, the financial arrangements surrounding Fred's hut were lost from local corporate memory as well as from the FCV official files. When Fred was reported in a critical condition in a Melbourne Hospital in early May 1971 the Commission found to its surprise that it owned 66% of the building.

Fred died on 10 May 1971, aged 76. He had written his Last Will & Testament 20 years earlier, on 31 January 1951. His executor, Robert (Bob) Ritchie (another proud hut owner and shire councillor), held discussions with the Mansfield District Forester, Jack Channon, soon after Fred's death indicating he was keen to see the building preserved. Bob generously declared Fred's 34% equity as nil, so the Forests Commission then found itself the proud 100% owner of Fry's Hut.

Probate was lodged with the Supreme Court on 21 June 1971. The legal documents record Fred's total assets as four small building blocks on the other side of the river in the old Howqua township – value \$400, one draft horse mare – value \$150, one 10-year-old pony mare – value \$300 and another old mare with zero value – how sad is that? His household effects and other contents such as horse saddles and harnesses were catalogued as worn and of little or no value. Importantly, there was no mention of any equity in his hut in any of the probate documentation.

Fred was retired from the FCV so would have received an old age pension. He held the grand sum of \$500 in the Mansfield Branch of the Bank of NSW. And that was all. He bequeathed his entire estate to Mansfield District Hospital and there were no other beneficiaries.

Jack Channon proposed keeping the hut for public use because of its magnificent setting and rich history. He also added that the Forests Commission could use it as a base for work crews or firefighting.

The hut was described as "quite solid although rough" but vandalism was the main concern if the hut remained unused.

Around the same time, the new 45km Howqua Feeder Track was being built by the Forests Commission past Fry's Hut along some old mining tracks to join up with the Alpine Walking Track (AWT) at Mount Howitt. An approach was made to the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs to gauge their level of interest in maintaining and using the hut. The Federation responded positively but listed many important and expensive works that needed to be undertaken first, and the idea eventually lapsed.

Hughie Brown arrived as the newly appointed District Forester at Mansfield on 20 October 1971 and identified essential works to stabilise the building.

In September 1972, staff from Mansfield completed a chain and compass survey to set aside seven acres of state forest around the hut under the Lands Act as a Public Purposes Reserve to regulate camping and protect the building.

But by June 1973, no works had been done on the hut and Hughie Brown feared for its future. He correctly said, "This building has a great historic value and is treasured by a large section of the community".

In September 1974, the Commission finally approved expenditure and, by mid-1975, Hughie Brown reported that various works had been completed to secure the integrity of the building and its surrounds. The large pine tree overshadowing the building was removed.

Geelong Grammar, which operated Timbertop, offered in 1974 to take a role in oversight and care of the hut after Fred's death.

The National Parks Service later took responsibility for Fry's Hut when the Alpine National Park was declared in 1989, and they undertook refurbishment works between 1988 and 1991.

Additional working bees have been organised by Parks Victoria, the Victorian High-Country Huts Association and 4WD Clubs. There was another major restoration to replace rotting timbers in 2007.

Even though Fry's Hut has been altered since its original construction it remains historically and socially significant to Victoria.

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ROBERT ONFRAY'S BLOGS AND OTHER WRITING

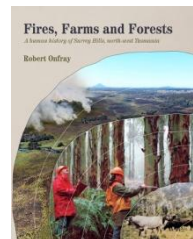
Robert Onfray continues his accounts on two different topics each month – stories about travelling around Australia, and on forestry/land management issues. The final instalment of his Surrey Hills blog was published in June 2024, but all of the Surrey Hills blogs remain on his website www.robortonfray.com. Robert will also be introducing a blog on Fraser Island to accompany his forthcoming book – see below for more info.

While the AFHS newsletter tends to focus on the forestry/land management blog, his travel articles are also worth checking out. His website includes details of how to subscribe to his e-mail list. His Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/robortonfraywriter.

The following articles have been published since our August 2024 issue.

Forestry/Land Management

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| September: | Reflections on working in a hippy valley |
| October: | The unsung timber product during war time |
| November: | Another flood, another poor response |
| November (No. 2): | Logging on the edge |
| December: | A wooden pipeline that carries more than water – it carries a lot of history |



Robert's 2021 book, *Fires, Farms and Forests: A Human History of Surrey Hills, north-west Tasmania*, can be ordered from his website for a cost of \$55 plus postage.

He is also working on a book on Fraser Island with hopes for the manuscript to be finished by the end

of 2024. The book will have 23 chapters, divided into five parts:

1. Beginning.
2. Using the timber.
3. Making and managing the new forests.
4. The beginning of the end.
5. The final part.

Robert's articles are also published by *Australian Rural & Regional News* <https://arr.news>.

'THE BUSH CALLS US': THE DEFIANT WOMEN WHO DEMANDED A PLACE ON THE WALKING TRACK

By Ruby Ekkel, PhD candidate Australian National University

This article was first published on 25 October 2024 by *The Conversation* <https://bushwalking-women-blazing-a-trail.netlify.app>. It is reprinted under a "Creative Commons – Attribution/No derivatives licence". The original article includes photos and images that aren't included here; editorial production on the webpage was provided by Nicole Hasham (Energy + Environment Editor) and Matt Garrow (Editorial Web Developer).

Thanks to Shana Nerenberg for drawing it to our attention.

THE CONVERSATION

Many Australians feel drawn to explore the bush on foot. Bushwalking offers a chance to escape the city, forge friendships, explore beautiful scenery and keep our bodies and [minds](#)¹ healthy.

But the bushwalking track wasn't always a place where women felt welcome.

In the 1920s and '30s, some people scoffed at the idea women could handle rugged encounters with nature. The bush was considered a place for men.

Besides, how could women walk rocky paths and steep hills in their long skirts and dainty shoes?

But some courageous women walked anyway. The Melbourne Women's Walking Club formed in 1922, and was the first of its kind in Australia.

The women were criticised and sometimes harassed, especially when they experimented with wearing pants – or even shorts.

But the women found solace in friendship and a shared love of nature. My [new research](#)² sheds light on the stories of these remarkable women.

The birth of a movement

First Nations people have walked the Australian landscape for many thousands of years. European walking for leisure dates back to the early settlers, though the word "bushwalk" was coined much later.

As Australian scholar [Melissa Harper has shown](#)³, walking became more popular as a pastime in the early 1900s. A number of male-only clubs spawned, but women were excluded – only on the occasional Ladies' Day were they permitted to walk with the men.

In 1922, a group of women decided they wanted their own bushwalking club – and the Melbourne Women's Walking Club was born. The women defied societal expectations by walking in bushland across Victoria and beyond – sometimes for weeks at a time.

The annual program offered between 30 and 40 walks catering to a range of abilities, as well as a busy calendar of other social events.

Taking a hike with the Melbourne Women's Walking Club

In a time before most women had access to cars, club members typically met at Flinders Street Station then took a train to the start of their hike. Walking destinations included Wilsons Promontory, the You Yangs, Phillip Island, the Grampians, Anglesea and Mount Buller.

In the club's early years, the women waited until they were in the bush, hidden from public view, before stripping off their bulky skirts and donning jodhpurs instead. By the 1930s, some women even wore shorts.

The women carried a communal billy and took mealtimes seriously. For a weekend walking trip, the recommended packing list for each woman included:

- creamed rice
- pre-cooked stew and vegetables
- tinned pineapple and cream
- grapefruit
- eggs and bacon
- steak for grilling over the campfire
- six teaspoons of tea
- four teaspoons of coffee
- two crumpets (for tea on Sunday)

The women carried homemade sleeping bags for overnight and multi-day walks. Sometimes, pack-horses joined the journey.

On caravan trips, such as the one depicted in [this image](#)⁴, the women were driven into the bush in a specially converted open-side furniture van.

Challenging journeys

Not every trip by the Melbourne Women's Walking Club went exactly to plan.

One club member, Margery Luth, recounted in the club's journal a particularly challenging walk to Mount Buller in 1938. As they hiked, a hailstorm hit. They stopped overnight to sleep in a shed, but the roof leaked and it flooded. On the way home, the bus broke down and was involved in an accident. Luth, however, found the trip "thoroughly enjoyable" and wrote lyrically of observing the bush after dark:

It was a heavenly night [...] all the beauty of the bush was visible, the feathery foliage of the wattles, the sparkle of the gum leaves, the tracery of tree ferns and the tangle of undergrowth.

– Margery Luth

On another walk in December 1928, a group became lost for two days in the Bogong High Plains in punishing December heat. Their food supplies diminished and they ran out of water. The women eventually found shelter for the night in a walkers' hut, where one woman photographed the group grinning wildly.⁵

¹ SBS 2022, updated 2024. "The power of walking in nature: Bushwalking in Australia". Australia Explained.

www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast-episode/the-power-of-walking-in-nature-bushwalking-in-australia/ydrpp0jpo

² Ruby Ekkel, 2024. "The Meaning of a Bushwalk with the Melbourne Women's Walking Club, 1922-45." *Australian Historical Studies*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2024.2406839>.

³ Melissa Harper, 2021. *The Ways of the Bushwalker on Foot in Australia*. www.historyvictoria.org.au/product/the-ways-of-the-bushwalker-on-foot-in-australia-by-melissa-harper

⁴ <https://images.theconversation.com/files/627237/original/file-20241022-19-nc020c.png>

⁵ <https://images.theconversation.com/files/626831/original/file-20241021-15-e7kiew.jpg>

And tragically, on a bushwalk in 1937, one club member died after an accident. Olive Sandell, a young clerk at the Melbourne Children's Hospital, fell and hit her head while hiking the Cathedral Ranges. She died surrounded by her fellow walkers.⁶

For some women, even getting to the track was a challenge. For example a new mother, writing in the club's journal, expressed how she missed her bushwalking friends and joked of starting a "rival walking club" consisting of herself, her toddler and her dog.

Marriage and domestic responsibilities could also prevent women from walking. In 1936, the journal's editor wrote of a club member's impending marriage, and expressed her hope that the soon-to-be husband would not force his wife to "forgo tripping with the troops to keep him in holeless socks and juicy steaks!"

A controversial pastime

Members of the Melbourne Women's Walking Club cherished their time in the bush. They formed firm friendships and laughed and sang together. They rejoiced in escaping their domestic responsibilities and the busyness and pollution of city life.

On the sweltering Bogong High Plains trip in 1928, a friendly farmer offered the walkers a swim in his dam. The women only had one pair of bathers between them, but landed on a solution: one walker would wear the bathers and jump in the dam, and when she was immersed in water, would wriggle out of the bathers and throw them to the next would-be swimmer, and so on. The women's written accounts express their enjoyment of this small, shared scandal.

While some observers [welcomed](#)⁷ the women's disregard for convention, others were highly critical.

In a newspaper article in 1932, the Archbishop of Brisbane, James Duhig, described women bushwalkers in male clothes as "[absolutely nauseating](#)"⁸. He warned wearing pants might encourage risk-taking, saying:

I know that young girls dressed in men's garments would go to places where they would never venture in their proper attire.

Other critics accused the women of attention-seeking or simply [following a fad](#)⁹.

The women often attracted unwelcome attention and lewd comments, especially when taking public transport to the beginning of each walk. They felt relief at beginning the bushwalk, safe with friends and far from judgement.

True trailblazers

The Melbourne Women's Walking Club was the first of its kind in Australia. But other women of the era also took their place on the walking track. They include Jessie Luckman of Tasmania, Marie Byles and Dot Butler of New South Wales, and Alice Manfield who led guided walks on Victoria's Mount Buffalo.

Thanks in part to the audacity of early female bushwalkers, it is no longer controversial for women to walk unchaperoned or wear shorts.

But that doesn't mean women don't still [face discrimination](#)¹⁰ and [safety threats](#)¹¹ in outdoor spaces. There is a way to go before everyone feels welcome and safe in Australia's great outdoors.

Many members of the Melbourne Women's Walking Club went on to become committed conservationists. Several played vital roles in advocating for the protection of the natural spaces we enjoy today.

For example Jean Blackburn, an enthusiastic club member from 1934 until her death in 1983, played a leading role in the creation of national parks in Victoria. The club survived the stresses of the Second World War and a slump in membership in the 1950s. Today, more than 100 years after its inception, the Melbourne Women's Walking Club is still going strong. In fact, today it boasts its largest ever membership.

So, next time you set out for a hike, spare a thought for the extraordinary Australian women who fought for their place on the bushwalking track – and paved the way for generations to follow.

THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

The Australian Women's History Network promotes research and writing in all fields of feminist, gender, and women's history. It brings together scholars, students and others working in feminist, gender and women's history to exchange ideas, information, support and resources.

The network issues the peer-reviewed *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, first published in Melbourne in 1984. An annual publication, it has articles and reviews in all areas of feminist, gender and women's history (not limited to Australia). For further information, see www.auswhn.com.au, www.auswhn.com.au/lilith and www.facebook.com/lilithjournal.



⁶ *Alexandra & Yea Standard and Yarek, Gobur, Thornton and Acheron Express*, 19 Nov 1937, p2. "Fatal Accident".

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/64736425>

⁷ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 1938, p12. "Those Nine to Six Girls: Varied Talent in City Business Houses". <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article17473372>

⁸ *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 13 July 1932, p2. "Sunday Hiking Movement: Views of Church Leaders". <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article181268268>

⁹ *The Argus* (Melbourne), 14 July 1932, p6. "Why Girls Like to Hike: The Latest Fashion". <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article4462852>

¹⁰ Marquita K. Harris, 17 June 2021. "Hiking is not just for able-bodied white people anymore". *Health Online*. www.healthline.com/health/outdoor-health/hiking-is-becoming-more-inclusive

¹¹ Mary Iliadis, 17 Aug 2022. "Women running in cities made for men: ending abuse and violence is a marathon effort". *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/women-running-in-cities-made-for-men-ending-abuse-and-violence-is-a-marathon-effort-188162>



A TRIBUTE TO DR JOHN DARGAVEL 15 AUGUST 1932 - 20 JULY 2024

By Peter Kanowski and Brian Turner

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John Dargavel's long and distinguished professional life as a forester began with a focus on quantitative forest management, moved to the social and political dimensions of forests and forestry, and linked the two in their historical contexts. John made major contributions in each of these arenas, and he leaves a wide-ranging body of writing that offers insight, interest and – as he was fond of saying – at least occasional delight.

John was born in England in 1932; as a child, he experienced the horror and drama of the attacks on London in the Second World War. Eighty years later, he published some of his wartime memories in a chapter of his last book, *Anthropocene Days*. His forestry career began when Surrey County Council sponsored him to study forestry at Edinburgh University in 1953. On graduation, he promptly set sail for Australia, taking up his first job in South Australia with that state's Woods and Forests Department. After a short sojourn in rather basic conditions there, John continued east to Gippsland, where he worked, over the next 20 years, in various technical and management roles for Australia's major private forestry company at the time, APM.

Early in his Gippsland days, John met his wife-to-be, Ricki, through their mutual interest in the theatre. They married in 1962 and flourished together – with their children, Tim, Alison and Stephen, and grandchildren – until John's death. John's fondness for and delight in his family mirrored, and even outshone, that in his professional work.

In 1969-1970, the Dargavels spent a year at the University of Georgia, United States, where John developed his technical skills in forest economics, planning and management under the mentorship of Professor Jerry Clutter, the recognised world leader in the emerging field of forest modelling. He also acquired a taste for universities and teaching, foreshadowing the next part of his career. John completed a Masters at the University of Melbourne in 1970 and began collaborations that would continue for the rest of his career, notably with Brian Turner, whom he lured from expatriate life in the United States – first to APM on sabbatical and later to the Australian National University (ANU) as one of its senior forestry academics.

John and others with whom he worked were at the forefront of using computers and computing power to 'optimise' forest management, work that was then intellectually and technically challenging, with hardware

clunky by today's standards and often written by the forest managers, like John, themselves. John's Gippsland plantation model was one of the first in Australia to be used in management decision-making. Years later, John and Brian teamed up again to produce a next-generation model to help support multiple-use management decisions in the native forests of the Victorian Otways.

Many foresters worked with John at APM, including those of subsequent generations who began their careers under John's guidance. Universally, their reflections of those experiences are of a kind, generous and thoughtful professional person, whom they came to respect greatly – both because of John's interest in and respect for them, and for the quality of his work and leadership – characteristics they then sought to emulate in their own careers.

The second phase of John's professional career began in 1978, when he started a PhD at the ANU – that academic phase, and affiliation with the ANU, continued for 55 years, until 2023. While he didn't leave his earlier technical focus and competence entirely behind, John pivoted from the forest sciences of his first 20 years to the social sciences and humanities in forestry and the environment, work that spoke more directly to his commitment to social justice and interest in politics as the means of envisioning and realising social change.

John began those 55 years, one of profound change in Australians' relationship with their environment and forests, in characteristically subversive terms, with a PhD that he described as 'a radical analysis of the development of the Tasmanian wood industries'¹. That work set the stage for more than half a century of innovative and important academic work that focused primarily on understanding forest and environmental history as a foundation for illuminating the present and informing the future – internationally, as well as in Australia. In this context, John catalysed the foundation of the Australian Forest History Society in 1988, of which he was a longstanding president, and played a strong role in its international counterpart within the International Union of Forest Research Organizations.

John was a gifted author, and he brought that talent to bear in his authorship or co-authorship of four books, editorship of something like a dozen major conference proceedings, and more than twice that many scholarly papers. One set of these – including the books *Fashioning Australia's Forests* (1995), *The Zealous Conservator* (2008), *Science and Hope* (2013, with Elizabeth Johann), and the *Australia's Ever-changing Forests* conference proceedings series – focus on forest history. This body of work also included a focus on the lives of Australian foresters through a collaborative project with the Australian Dictionary of Biography.²

Peter Kanowski
College of Medicine, Biology and Environment
Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
Peter.Kanowski@anu.edu.au
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8716-0282>
Brian Turner
Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

¹ John Brunton Dargavel, 1982. *The development of the Tasmanian wood industries: a radical analysis*. <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/items/87fe3683-4848-42de-b997-4484a215309b>
² John Dargavel, 2015. "Australia's Foresters", Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/17/text32330>

A second set of publications, intersecting with the first, addressed contemporary forest issues in Australia – particularly, but not only, forest conflicts, plantation forests, and the forestry profession's understanding of itself and others. In this work, John aimed to bring the perspective of a 'critical friend' to these issues and challenges. As he wrote in "The political detection of an Australian forestry perspective" (Dargavel 1980):

The hope of this review is that a study of the [set of recently published] essays will lead to at least a tentative statement of the values, beliefs and political position of the general Australian forestry community and provide an initial basis from which further debate might be provoked.

Proposing and contesting ideas is at the heart of academic work, and that came naturally to John – not only in his writing but in how he engaged with colleagues, students and other scholars. He liked to provoke debate, in its best sense. As Professor Stephen Dovers, who succeeded John when he retired from the ANU Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, observed:

There are very few like John who linked environment/forest history through to current policy and management – always invaluable insights that, in the midst of arguments about the now, would expose the why. And also someone who could understand and argue the perspectives of both labour and capital, environment and development, often and entertainingly to the frustration of those firmly in one camp or the other!

At ANU, John supervised and mentored many PhD students, just as he had forestry students and young professionals at APM. As one of those, Mary Hobley, wrote in terms that resonated for many others:

John was the most amazing mentor, PhD supervisor and lifelong friend. He gave me the courage to stretch my brain [and] to challenge orthodoxies ... He gave me the principles and the audacity to pursue a lifelong fascinating career in international development, always asking the big questions and never being frightened to challenge power and focus on giving voice to those who are so easily excluded by their gender, class and ethnicity. John helped me see the power relationships that transcend our world and make so much inequality. He helped me see we can all help to change these relationships and we all have an individual duty to do so.

John's humanity and scholarship contributed much to Australian forestry for 70 years. He leaves a substantial body of thoughtful, insightful and interesting written work, from which we can continue to better understand forest history and forest management and the implications for current and future decisions about forests. He also leaves a diverse community of scholars and practitioners who benefited enormously from his, and also frequently Ricki's, engagement with their work and lives.

Reference

John Dargavel, 1980. The political detection of an Australian forestry perspective. *Australian Forestry*, 43(1), 5-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049158.1980.10674239>.

VALE, JOHN DARGAVEL

By Alessandro Antonello, *Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Environmental History Network*

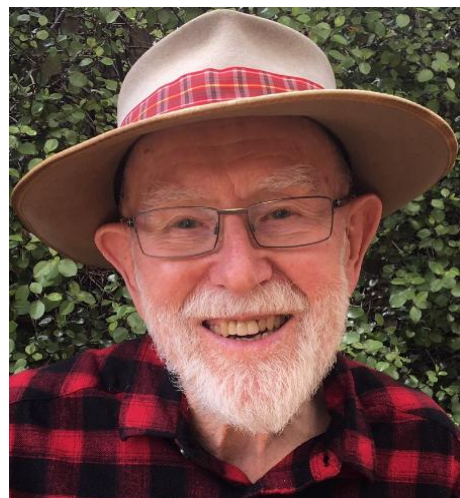
This article was first published on 22 August 2024 by the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Environmental History Network. It is reprinted with the permission of Jess Urwin of the EHN.

The Australian forest and environmental history communities have lost one of their pioneering figures: the eminent forester and historian John Dargavel passed away on 20 July 2024. In addition to his many influential publications, John was a founding member of the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Environmental History Network. His most recent contribution to the Network was to co-edit, with Ben Wilkie, a collection of essays titled *Restoring Forests in Times of Contagion* in honour of the 400th anniversary of John Evelyn, published in October 2020.

John was a long-standing member of the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University, and they published a tribute to him at <https://fennerschool.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/vale-john-dargavel>.

When John published *Anthropocene Days* in 2023, he sat down for a rich and wide-ranging interview about his life and career with Jess Urwin, which was published in *Global Environment*.

Editor's note: *The Fenner School tribute was published in full in our newsletter of August 2024 (p3) The issue of "Global Environment" which included John's interview with Jess Urwin was reviewed in the April 2024 issue (p19), along with a link to the interview – www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/10.3197/ge.2023.160306.*



VALE PROFESSOR JAMES KIRKPATRICK AM

*Ecological Society of Australia –
 By Perpetua Turner, President*

This article was first published in October 2024 by the Ecological Society of Australia <https://www.ecolsoc.org.au/news/vale-professor-james-kirkpatrick>. Copyright remains with the ESA and the ESA's permission is required to re-publish this article in any format – more info at www.ecolsoc.org.au/copyright.

It is with aching sadness that I bear the news that Distinguished Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick AM died earlier this week. I extend my sincerest condolences to his partner and family, and to all who knew him, worked with him and laughed with him.

Jamie was President of the Ecological Society of Australia 1996-1997, won the 2009 ESA Gold Medal, and was an active ESA member. Jamie's commitment to the ESA was never ending, staying in touch with the Society even in the past few weeks.

In the words of Kerry Bridle, 'James Barrie Kirkpatrick was a legend'.

When starting my PhD, I had a choice to undertake it at The University of Melbourne or The University of Tasmania. Jamie is the reason why I moved to Tasmania. He was welcoming, supportive, and used his skills to guide, so his students could benefit the most from learning. He encouraged and reminded you that you were the expert in your field; he was a supervisor, mentor, teacher and friend. Jamie continued to support my career beyond my PhD including through collaborating on research papers, asking after my family, and supporting my post-doc in Plant Science and lecturing in Ecosystem Conservation. Jamie was also my husband's Head of School (in Geography and Environmental Studies) and supported Darren going part-time so we could better balance our growing family and our careers.

In what were to be his last words to those of us who gathered recently on the Queens Domain in Hobart, Jamie reminded us of his loves, and to be kind.

He loved to teach. Thousands of students devoured his words and grew through his lessons. He supervised and co-supervised hundreds of honours and post-graduate students during his 51 years of academic life.

He loved to write and changed the world with his words. Through his books, peer-reviewed research papers, grant applications and reports, he influenced and progressed ecology and conservation across Australia and overseas.

He loved to talk and had a wonderful ability to turn a phrase. Whether it be through a presentation, a walk and talk, arguments or conversations, Jamie always managed to share knowledge, contribute decisively and stay focused.

He loved Australian flora, and threatened species were a passion. He cared for the smallest plant (even cryptogams!) through to the tallest tree. His research loves included gardens, coasts, grasslands, woodlands and forests, and the Australian alps.

He loved being on Country and fought long and hard for nature conservation. Jamie was not afraid of venturing into the political fray but did so with decorum.

Jamie's legacy to ecology lives on through the plethora of students he taught, the papers and books he wrote and the knowledge he shared. He prepared us to continue his work without him. And so, we shall.

University of Tasmania

This article was first published on 23 October 2024 by the University of Tasmania on its Facebook page www.facebook.com/UniversityofTasmania/posts/vale-distinguished-professor-james-kirkpatrick-am-who-died-this-week-there-are-f/1008979281273334.

Vale Distinguished Professor James Kirkpatrick AM, who died this week.

There are few people who are as passionate about and committed to their scholarship and to teaching others as Jamie. He dedicated his life's work to understanding and looking after the natural world.

Jamie's career at the University began in January 1972 as a lecturer in Geography. He was appointed Professor in Geography and Environmental Studies in 1988 and was Head of various academic units throughout his career.

In 2003, Jamie was made a Member of the Order of Australia. In 2006, he was awarded the Doctor of Science by the University. He was appointed a Distinguished Professor in 2009. He also served as a member of many influential government and non-government committees in the area of nature conservation, which defined his life.

These are amazing achievements. It was however the person that Jamie was and the unique human qualities he brought that really stood out to those who knew him.

His colleagues describe him as the heart and soul of the School of Geography, Planning, and Spatial Sciences, and he was still teaching and actively supervising students until very recently.

Jamie's legacy will live on in many ways. It will carry on through the knowledge he created and so generously imparted. It will be found in the wild places he visited and cared for. It will exist in the people he taught, worked with and cared about.

His story and presence will remain imprinted in the life of our University and our island.

We extend our sincere condolences to all who knew and worked with Jamie.



JOYCE DINGWELL'S NOVELS ON THE FOREST INDUSTRY

By Fintán Ó Laighin

One of my final exchanges with John Dargavel was over his review of Alison Gibbs's 2021 novel *Repentance* which was published in the August 2024 newsletter; he said that he couldn't think of any other novels that had the forest industry as a background, apart from Katharine Susannah Prichard's 1926 work *Working Bullocks*.

I mentioned that Mills & Boon author, Joyce Dingwell, had written books with the forest industry as a backdrop. One of them, *The House in the Timberwoods*, was turned into a 1983 film *The Winds of Jarrab* that was shot in northern NSW. (Where else would a movie with WA species "jarrah" in the title be filmed?) Interestingly, the book of the film was written by Marion Nixon.

Joyce Dingwell is a pen name for Enid Joyce Owen Starr who was born in Sydney in 1909 and died on the Central Coast of NSW in 1997.¹ Between 1955 and 1986, she published about 80 novels, including a few, maybe 10, under the name Kate Starr.² Her novels have been translated into at least four languages – Finnish, French, German and Italian. She was the first Australian writer to be published by Mills & Boon.³

She also wrote poetry (including for children), short stories and prose, generally under the name Joyce Owen Starr, although at least one short story was published as Joyce Dingwell. Her stories were published from 1936 to 1939, all but one in *The Australian Journal*, while her poetry – published from 1928 to 1945 – appeared almost exclusively in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. She published a children's book in 1931, *Hum of the Forest: An Australian Fairy Story*, and a short prose piece about mountain gums (just five paragraphs), in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in February 1931.^{4,5}

She also wrote a radio play, *Sugar Susan*, that was broadcast on the ABC in 1936, one of several prize winners in the ABC's Australian plays and sketches competition of 1936. An article in *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) says that "Miss Joyce Starr (of) Morrison Road Ryde" was one of five winners of a £1 prize.⁶

While there may be others, the titles of two of her novels – *The House in the Timberwoods* (1959) and *The Timber Man* (1964) – indicate a setting of the timber industry. The descriptions on the back covers set the scenes:

The House in the Timberwoods: Dinah had urgent reasons for wanting to go to Australia, and she jumped at the chance of a job in New South Wales, even if it meant supervising three unruly "brats" in the back of beyond. Despite their antagonism, she felt fairly confident of holding her own with the children. At least they were less of a problem than her employer, Timber Marlow, whose scathing manner revealed only too clearly his contempt for all women.

The Timber Man: To anyone who didn't know the facts, Mim Tarrant could appear to be practising a rather nasty form of deceit, and somehow she didn't want Blaze Barlow, the timber man, to think badly of her. But, for her young brother's sake, she couldn't tell him the truth."

The Winds of Jarrab (the film version of *The House in the Timberwoods*) starred Terence Donovan and Susan Lyons and was filmed in Dorrigo and Bellingen in early 1983. According to Alan Petschack, it was the first film to be made from a Mills & Boon book. He also writes that "Bob Ellis and his scriptwriter and novelist wife Anne Brooksbank created the film script. Bob later (1996 interview) called it a "shocking film ... which, would you believe, started out as a very good script and only about one sentence of it survived". Film reviewer Paul Harris described the finished work as being full of ludicrous dialogue which defeated the best attempts of the actors to create plausible characters. It had minimal cinema release, and 3 years later was extensively cut for video stores onto VHS cassette tape."⁷



Top two rows: Various editions of *The House in the Timberwoods*, *The Timber Man*, and *The Winds of Jarrab*.

Bottom row: Film editions of *The Winds of Jarrab* – Australia/USA, Spain, Sweden, Finland and a UK VHS edition. Images taken from www.imdb.com/title/tt0086591, australiancinema.info/films/windsofjarrab.html and www.fixgalleria.net/release.php?id=8243. The VHS image is from my personal collection.

¹ Wikipedia "Joyce Dingwell".

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joyce_Dingwell

² The exact number of novels written by Joyce Dingwell is a bit uncertain as some novels were published in other countries under different titles, and some reprints were issued with new titles. A number of titles aren't held by the National Library of Australia.

³ *Australian Hospital*, published by Mills & Boon in 1955. Hospitals, nurses and doctors form the background of many of Dingwell's books, along with ones on life on the land. See Alice Quinn, 2024 "Library love stories: Romance in the National Library of Australia's collection". www.library.gov.au/news-media/library-love-stories-romance-national-library-australias-collection

⁴ AustLit. www.austlit.edu.au

⁵ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1931, p9 "Mountain Gums. Coloured by Changing Seasons".

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/1164448>

⁶ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 31 March 1936, p16 "Radio Play Competition. Adelaide Journalist Wins First Prize. A.B.C. awards". <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/35420519>

⁷ Alan Petschack 2020. Comments accompanying his Youtube post that has the film's lead titles and end credits and selected clips. www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoWm6hHdRcE



2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND THE 2025 COMMITTEE

The society's Annual General Meeting was held in Canberra on Thursday 21 November 2024. The following committee was elected:

President:	Kevin Frawley
Vice-President:	Vacant
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Fintán Ó Laighin
Committee:	Peter Evans Juliana Lazzari Sybil Ungar (Jack)
Public officer:	Juliana Lazzari

Outgoing President's Report

By Juliana Lazzari

I would like to start by noting the death of John Dargavel who was one of the society's founding members. John remained active in the society right up to his death with the most recent newsletter containing two of his articles. John was such a constant presence in the society that it will be hard to imagine the AFHS without him.

I should also note that there may be other members who have died since our last AGM, but John is the only one I'm aware of.

It has been a quiet year once again and our main activity has been producing the newsletter which is published three times a year. Since our AGM in November 2023, three issues have been published – December 2023, April 2024 and August 2024, with another being prepared for December. A big thank you to the newsletter editors, Fintán Ó Laighin and Peter Evans, for their efforts, and also to the contributors. For a small society, I think we produce a high quality newsletter. Contributions from members are encouraged.

Our website is still the main point of information for both members and non-members. Many thanks to Robert Onfray who continues to be highly responsive and effective at uploading our newsletters, usually within hours of being asked to do so. Robert began helping to look after the website after Jan Oosthoek stepped down in early 2023; Sybil Ungar (Jack) has recently offered to help co-manage the website. Many members will know Sybil as she has been one of our long-term members, and has presented papers at many, if not all, of our conferences.

There are still no plans to hold a conference, although any proposals are welcome. Indeed, proposals for any activity are encouraged as the society will only continue with an active membership. If members have ideas for projects they wish to undertake, proposals can be submitted to the committee for consideration.

Our membership numbers are stable. On 30 June, we had 46 members which was the same as it was in June 2023. There are more details in the treasurer's report.

We do rely on our members to be involved. We have a diminishing number of active people, so we encourage our members to be involved. When I agreed to be president at the 2020 AGM, it was primarily because we didn't want the position left unfilled as it was in 2019 following Sue Feary's term, and was also with the expectation that someone who was possibly more active in forest history would take over, so I put that out there. While this is my last AGM as president, I look forward to continuing my involvement in the society.

Incoming President's Report

By Kevin Frawley

At the society's AGM on 21 November 2024, I took over as president from Juliana Lazzari and she replaced me as public officer. She had held the president's position since 2020 and agreed to fill the role so it wasn't vacant (as it had been in 2019-20). I'm now doing the same. I will continue preparing AGM minutes. Maintaining a committee and public officer is required for our registration as an incorporated association. As well as Fintán Ó Laighin in his ongoing treasurer's role, over the last few years, others on the committee are or have been Peter Evans, Stuart Pearson and Sybil Ungar (Jack), while John Gray (dec.) was public officer for a few years.

A great loss for the society and forest history both in Australia and internationally was the death of John Dargavel earlier in 2024 aged not quite 92 (see AFHS Newsletter no. 92, August 2024). John and I were doing PhDs at ANU at the same time (in different departments) in the early 1980s and his attendance at my PhD seminar, and his incisive questions, were the beginning of a long-shared journey in forest history and environmental history more broadly. I'm not sure if any other person remains from the first informal meetings about Australian forest history held in the ANU Forestry School in the 1980s (but I was probably the youngest there).

This leads on to the question that must be faced – which is the future of the society. We have an informative website which sets out the legacy of the society and makes available all the newsletters, both recent and archived. Thanks to Robert Onfray for website maintenance. The newsletters are excellent, with credit there to Fintán.

John Dargavel (present at the 2023 AGM by Zoom) made a suggestion regarding the society's records and remaining funds. So, basically, the committee will operate to maintain the society and at the 2025 AGM, we will return to the question. I think Fintán is keen to see newsletter no. 100 produced before the society folds (if indeed that's what happens); this will be in April 2027 if we keep to the current schedule of three issues a year, so keep that material coming!

Treasurer's Report

By Fintán Ó Laighin

For the third year running, the society has made a profit – about \$144; nothing major, but better than losing money. The turnaround in fortunes (so to speak) was largely driven by the decision made in 2021-22 to distribute newsletters by e-mail rather than post. This has saved a considerable amount on printing and postage, as well as a great deal of effort. Until then, the society had only made a profit in years when we held a conference and this tided us over until the following conference; however, even those profits had become increasingly modest. Our financial statement suggests a huge increase in website costs since last year, from \$77 to \$534.

However, this is not as dramatic as it might seem as it arises from having renewed the website hosting for three years in advance for which we received a 35% discount.

Our membership has remained stable – 46 at 30 June 2024 which is the same as at 30 June 2023 compared with 52 at 30 June 2022. This is well within the normal fluctuation. On 30 June 2021, for example, we only had 31 members. However, not everyone has renewed for 2024-25, and I encourage our members from 2023-24 and earlier to do so.

At the 2023 AGM, members were advised that the society's post office box (Box 5128, Kingston ACT) would close at the end of March 2024 and a mail redirection would be organised. However, the post office advised that cost of a mail redirection would be over \$1400, compared with \$154 to renew the lease for a year. The lease was therefore renewed and the few senders of any letters were advised of the impending change of address. The box will definitely close at the end of March 2025 with mail going to a separate box in Kingston (Box 6113) leased by one of our members. Finally, I would also like to thank my friend Graeme Wood for reviewing our accounts. This is the fifth year he has done so, first doing it in 2019-20. Graeme is not a member of the AFHS and does this on a voluntary basis. His scrutiny is greatly appreciated. Each year, the committee offers him a bottle of wine as an appreciation of his work, but he is yet to take us up on it.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY NETWORK - 2024 PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY PRIZE

The winner of the Environmental History Network's 2024 Public Environmental History Prize was Jared Davidson for his book *Blood and Dirt: Prison Labour and the Making of New Zealand* – www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2024/07/aanzehn-public-environmental-history-prize-2024-winner-announced. Readers may recall a request from Dr Davidson in our August 2023 newsletter (no. 89, pp11-12) in which he sought information on examples of prison forestry in Australia between 1902 and 1913, or earlier.

In 2023, the network introduced the Environmental History Book Prize which is awarded every two years. The 2023 prize was won by Lucy Mackintosh for her book *Shifting Grounds: Deep Histories of Tamaki Makaurau Auckland*. More info on both prizes is at www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/prizes.

WHO NAMED THE GENUS *EUCALYPTUS*?

By John Turnbull

This article was first published by the Friends of ACT Trees in its December 2024 newsletter <https://sites.google.com/site/factacanberra/news>. It is reprinted with permission.

A man who never saw Australia and never saw a eucalypt in the wild named the genus of the most important and dominant tree in the Australian flora. This man was Charles Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle.

L'Héritier was a Frenchman from a wealthy Parisian family. He became a judge in 1775 and was an enthusiastic amateur botanist. He was keen to publish the names of new species and employed several plant collectors. In 1785 L'Héritier and his illustrator, Pierre-Joseph Redouté, were involved in a scandal with the Spanish government over a collection of South American plants that he had acquired. To avoid the problem, they packed up the collection and fled to England.

In England, L'Héritier was able to work at Kew from 1786-87 on the Joseph Banks' collection of plant specimens. Among these specimens was a sample of a tree from Bruny Island, Tasmania, collected by David Nelson on James Cook's third expedition in 1777. L'Héritier described and named this specimen as *Eucalyptus obliqua*. It was illustrated in the publication by Redouté. The new genus name means "well-covered" in reference to the operculum, or lid, which covers the flower in bud.

When L'Héritier returned to France he was elected to the prestigious Academy of Sciences. Unfortunately for him, the French Revolution began in 1789. He was dismissed from his post as a judge, imprisoned and narrowly escaped the guillotine.

Powerful friends managed to get him released but in 1800 he was murdered with a blow from a sword while out walking at night in Paris. His assassin was never caught.

The genus *Heritiera*, now *Argyrodendron*, was named in his honour, but the genus he named is now known globally.

Editor's note: L'Héritier published "*Sertum Anglicum*" in 1788, with engravings by Redouté. Both Project Gutenberg and the Biodiversity Heritage Library have digitised copies online.

www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/38937/pg38937-images.html
www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/43456

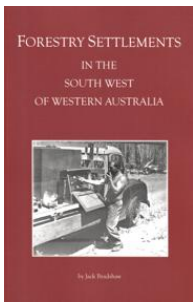


Wikipedia has articles on both men.

Charles Louis L'Héritier de Brutelle, 1746-1800
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Louis_L%27H%27ritier_de_Brutelle

Pierre-Joseph Redouté, 1759-1840
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre-Joseph_Redout%C3%A9

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



Jack Bradshaw, 2024. *Forestry Settlements in the South West of Western Australia*. York Gum Publishing ISBN 9780994227188. 39pp. B5, 2 maps, illustrated.

Hard copy limited availability from Jack Bradshaw \$30 at <jbrad@karriweb.com.au>.

PDF lodged with the library of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (WA), Perth.

Review by Ian Bevege.

The concentration of high grade commercial forests, primarily of jarrah and karri, in the south west corner of Western Australia enabled the development of an intensive sawmilling industry from the mid-1870s. As indicated by the author, by 1895 there were 35 sawmills operating employing 2500 men in logging, hauling and milling. An apparent increasing need for oversight and regulation saw the government establish the Woods and Forests Department (WFD) in that year with John Ednie Brown as Conservator. WFD's remit extended to management of other forests including those of the goldfields for industrial fuel, wattle bark, sandalwood and limited plantation development, but the focus of this book is on the settlements established to facilitate management and utilisation of the high forests of the south west.

The succinct Introduction of some six pages provides us with a potted early history of the WFD, renamed Forests Department under the *Forests Act 1919*, under a succession of Conservators of varying effectiveness: C.G. Richardson took over on the death of Ednie Brown in 1899; he was followed by Charles Lane Poole in 1916 and Stephen Kessell in 1923. Kessell oversaw the major interwar expansion of the department's activity during his tenure up to 1941, a period which coincided with the initial development of the forestry settlements, the extent of which was arguably a uniquely Western Australian endeavour within Australian forestry administration. Usefully the author uses extensive quotes from current protagonists of those early times to lend colour and provide context to that endeavour, including Ednie Brown, Kessell and Dick Perry who started work as a 14 year old apprentice in "the forestry" in 1917 and rose to a senior position in forest research.

The body of the book comprises eight sections, each spanning a 10-year time interval, hence covering some 80 years between 1919 and 1999. Kessell was the driving force behind the policy of providing permanent accommodation in the forest. The first houses were built in 1921 at Wonnerup mill; overseers' houses were built on individual forests. The system evolved into the establishment of small settlements in recognition that this "was desirable for the education of children, social interaction, and the provision of accommodation for permanent employees". The first such settlement was

near Dwellingup in 1927; individual houses continued to be provided in isolated areas as well as huts close to fire towers. In all by the end of 1927, 96 houses had been built in settlements together with 47 huts for single men. The impetus did not slow: by the end of 1939, 20 settlements and a further 123 houses had been built. The Depression provided further impetus with the employment of some 1500 men, accommodated in tent camps, on silviculture and thinning.

Due to the Second World War, the period 1939-49 saw a reduction of activity due to labour shortages and financial constraints but still some 23 houses were built and from 1944-46 the Forests Department established six camps for civilian alien internees and conscientious objectors. 1949-59 was probably the era of greatest expansion and building activity; 279 new houses were built, bringing the total to 454; the department was now a major housing provider and arguably the largest single provider outside of metropolitan Perth. From then on there was consolidation with movement of smaller settlements into larger centres and the association of departmental housing with established towns. Improved communication technology and roads facilitated such movements and the introduction of spotter aircraft lessened the need for personnel to be permanently located at towers, most of which fell into disuse.

But this book is not just a catalogue of housing statistics. "Between 1928 and 1960, a total of 57 settlements were established with more than 500 houses and 350 huts for single staff. 17 settlements were attached to what could be called normal towns, 11 were associated with sawmill towns and the remaining 29 were isolated from other communities. The settlement enclaves were invariably known as 'the forestry'". There is a perceptive chapter entitled "The forestry" in which Jack Bradshaw provides a social pen picture of nature of the settlements, and of the people and families that made them tick. His "lived experience" adds to the authenticity of this account. He goes further in his final chapter on the role of the settlements in the department's forest management, in particular during the early decades when this almost paramilitary organisation played such a critical role in the success of managing these settlements. Later decades, particularly after the amalgamation in 1985 of the Forests Department with Parks and Wildlife into the Department of Conservation and Land Management, saw the emergence of a more independent living model and the transfer of the housing resources to the Government Employees Housing Authority.

Jack Bradshaw has provided a valuable record of social housing provision in the bush at a time when that was the only rational response to acquiring the needed work force to service the burgeoning forest industries and forestry in Western Australia post-World War One. That this program thrived for the next 80 years lays down its own marker on the success of the Forests Department and the Western Australian government which funded the enterprise. No other state forestry service developed a housing program for their workers on such a scale possibly because their forest resources were more

fragmented and closer to established country towns and villages that could provide both the labour and permanent accommodation; many forest workers frequently spent the working week in bush camps returning home in towns at weekends.

The book is well produced and illustrated with excellent photographs of settlements and associated forest operations. There is a map showing location of 59 settlements from Wanneroo to Walpole and a useful bibliography. There is an acknowledgement to Alan Lush who started this project of recording the history of these settlements. Jack has made a further and important contribution to the steadily growing literature that will provide the future archive for the social history of Australian forestry, an institution and profession sadly in terminal decline.



Lars Erik Anton Sveding, 2022.
 Creating a public forest consciousness: Forestry and forest conservation in New Zealand, 1916-1935. PdD thesis submitted to Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington.
https://figshare.com/articles/thesis/Creating_a_public_forest_consciousness_Forestry_and_forest_conservation_in_New_Zealand_1916-1935/19780015?file=35142013

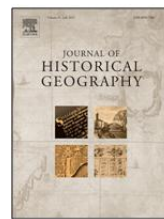
Abstract

By the middle of the 1910s, conservationists and scientific foresters in New Zealand feared that the Dominion faced a timber famine – a shortage of wood – as a result of the largescale deforestation that followed the British colonisation of New Zealand. To avoid a timber famine, forestry advocates and professional foresters sought to educate the public on the dangers of deforestation and the need for scientific forest management, hoping to create a public forest consciousness. This constituted a central aim of the work of the New Zealand Forestry League (NZFL), a voluntary conservation organisation formed in 1916, and later the New Zealand State Forest Service (SFS), established in 1919. By drawing upon a large body of primary sources, including official and unofficial material as well as published and unpublished material, this thesis examines the efforts of the NZFL and the SFS to create a public forest consciousness in the period of 1916-1935.

As this thesis shows, the NZFL and the SFS aimed to acquire public support for scientific forestry, have the public participate in the prevention of a timber famine either by planting trees or reducing waste, and also promote a public appreciation and realisation of the aesthetic and utilitarian value of forests and native birdlife. To create a public forest consciousness, the NZFL and the SFS employed a range of methods and tools. These included: holding lectures, promoting movies, putting up posters, distributing pamphlets and leaflets, publishing a popular magazine, supplying articles to journals and newspapers, selling and offering trees and seeds, as well as participating in exhibitions. The NZFL and the SFS also undertook propaganda schemes aimed

at particular groups of the public such as, farmers, the timber industry, and school children, to encourage private forestry, reduce waste, and instil both a love for forests and political support for forestry in the future generation. Lastly, the two organisations collaborated with the Native Bird Protection Society (Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society) in its work to safeguard indigenous avifauna. Making a public forest consciousness encompassed all aspects of forestry and forest conservation, from promoting the planting of exotic quick-growing timber trees to protecting native bird life to ensure the ecological wellbeing of indigenous forests.

This thesis, by examining the efforts of the NZFL and the SFS to create a public forest consciousness, adds to the environmental history of New Zealand. It expands institutional histories, by highlighting hitherto un-researched dimensions of public engagement by voluntary conservation organisations and the SFS. Furthermore, and perhaps most significantly, it expands the scholarship of environmental history in general by showcasing the value and importance forestry advocates and scientific foresters placed on public support and public participation in forest conservation.



Anton Sveding, 2023. Timber, money, and shelter: The promotion of private tree planting in New Zealand during the 1920s. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 81, 123-131.
www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305748823000634

Abstract

This article examines the promotion of private tree planting, in particular by farmers, by the New Zealand State Forest Service (SFS) as a solution to a timber shortage in the 1920s. While previous research has detailed the SFS's efforts to ensure a stable supply of timber by placing New Zealand's native forests under a system of sustained yield management and through the establishment of exotic plantations, it overlooks the importance the SFS placed on private tree plantations as a source of timber, expecting it to supply a third of New Zealand's timber demand. In its propaganda, the SFS portrayed tree planting as a mean to improve the productivity of the farm and as a financial investment. To assist farmers, the SFS also sold trees and seedlings to farmers, a practice that met with major resistance from private nurserymen and political lobby organisations. By exploring the SFS's promotion of private tree planting to farmers, this article demonstrates how the SFS built upon a tradition of experimental tree planting and promotion of exotic afforestation. Moreover, by examining the opposition to the policy of the SFS selling trees and seedlings to farmers, the article highlights the contesting notions of the state's role in promoting private tree planting; whether it was a responsibility of the state, or an invasion on the private market. On a broader scale, this paper demonstrates how local environmental and political conditions shaped responses to a perceived global timber shortage.



Anton Sveding and Jamie Beattie, 2023. 'A Lesson from China': Soil Menace Stories in New Zealand Conservation, 1910s–1940s. *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 25, 129-152. www.nzasia.org.nz and figshare.com/articles/journal_contribution/_A_LESSON_FROM_CHINA_SOIL_MENACE_STORIES_IN_NEW_ZEALAND_CONSERVATION_1910s_1940s/23699748?file=41590779

Abstract

Large-scale deforestation in Aotearoa New Zealand following British colonisation sparked environmental concerns amongst some authorities. To promote conservation, and demonstrate the evils of deforestation, New Zealand conservationists drew upon local and international examples. This article examines the employment by New Zealand conservationists of descriptions and images of deforestation in China, many originally written or taken by Americans. To Western conservationists, China constituted a cautionary tale of what awaited countries that failed to conserve their forests. In New Zealand, this narrative, which also encompassed a racial element, proved popular amongst non-scientifically trained conservationists until the 1940s, when erosion had become a widespread problem in New Zealand and China having become an ally in the war against Japan.

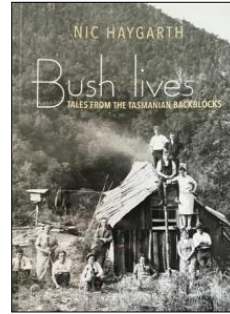


Jamie Ashworth, 2024. 'To tame what may be wild': Forestry, conservation and informational dispersal in

Wellington Province. *New Zealand Journal of Public History* 10, 1-19. Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand/Aotearoa (PHANZA). phanza.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Jamie-Ashworth-To-Tame-What-May-Be-Wild.pdf

Extract

This article examines the rich body of text produced by the male colonists of Wellington Province through the lens of environmental imperialism, with an awareness of how these texts intersected with the daily lives of both settlers and Māori through their interactions with highly politicised natural environments. It explores three major types of texts in English that were common in these communities at the time. First, it investigates the content of newspapers in Wellington Province between the 1850s and the 1870s, in particular public correspondence and the varying ideas and proposals about forests put forward within their pages. Second, personal correspondence and writing, including letters, journals and memoirs, are surveyed within the context of colonial forestry in the province. Third, the impact of handbooks, guides and other early academic literature on Wellington forestry is summarised and explained in relation to Julius Vogel's somewhat conservationist *New Zealand Forests Act 1874*, which enabled significant government oversight of deforestation. Readers are invited to consider how cultural and ecological forms of settler colonialism have continued to affect our understanding of the forests of the former Wellington Province to this day.



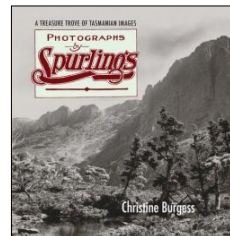
Nic Haygarth, 2024. *Bush lives: Tales from the Tasmanian backblocks*. Forty South. ISBN 9780645983531. \$50.

<https://shop.fortysouth.com.au/collections/new-releases/products/bush-lives-tales-from-the-tasmanian-backblocks-by-nic-haygarth-pb> and <https://nichaygarth.com/index.php/product/bush-lives>

From the publisher's notes.

Bush Lives is a rich account of life and leisure in the Tasmanian back country; chance encounters with Tasmanian tigers (thylacines), the post-Christmas dash for the bush, tough lives in hunting camps, tragedy in mining camps and the everyday aspirations of ordinary people in remote place all flavour this book.

Some of the stories have previously appeared as blogs, some have been pared down from journal articles and some have never been published. Lovers of Tasmanian history will recognise many of the names – Gustav and Kate Weindorfer, Thomas Goldie, Stephen Spurling III, Paddy Hartnett, Sylvie McArthur (the Balfour correspondent), to name just a few. Stories from across the state contain a wealth of fascinating information accompanied by wonderful historical and contemporary images.



Christine Burgess, 2024. *Photographs by Spurlings: A treasure trove of Tasmanian images*. Forty South. ISBN 9780645983593. \$65.

<https://shop.fortysouth.com.au/products/photographs-by-spurling-s-a-treasure-trove-of-tasmanian-images-by-christine-burgess-hb>

From the publisher's notes.

Stephen Spurling III's images transport the viewer beyond the everyday and in doing so, enrich the soul.

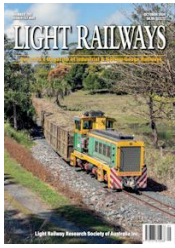
For nearly a century, from the mid-1800s, the Spurling name was synonymous with fine Tasmanian photography.

To obtain his images, Steve (as he was known) had to lug his cumbersome camera and fragile glass plates through trackless, inhospitable regions and rely on bush tucker for survival. Despite these difficulties, he returned with a bounty of wilderness images which helped sow the seed for the environment movement in Tasmania.

Although taken more than a hundred years ago, some of these images are still in use and have been deployed in conservation campaigns. Many others have become collectors' items and have found their way into museums, art galleries and libraries both in Australia and overseas.

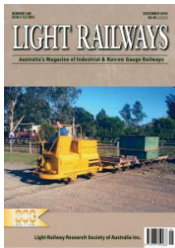
Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways, October 2024 (LR299) and December 2024 (LR300). Light Railway Research Society of Australia. ISSN: 0727 8101. www.lrrsa.org.au
www.facebook.com/people/Lrrsa-Light-Railway-Research-Society-of-Australia-Inc/100064543968038

All back issues of *Light Railways* are available from the LRRSA's website <https://lrrsa.org.au>, either as free downloads (nos. 1 to 287), \$7.95 each (nos. 288 to 289) or \$8.95 each (nos. 290 to 298). PDFs of nos. 288 onwards are \$5.50 each.



LR299 doesn't contain much information related to timber tramways or railway lines, but the letters page includes a contribution from Norm Houghton who provides a photo taken on Beech Forest railway in 1902 (p37).

There is also a short article (p45) on the closure of the Powelltown tramway in July 1944. The tramway was built in 1912-13 by Victorian Powell Wood Process Ltd.



The first thing to note about the December 2024 issue is that it is the 300th edition of *Light Railways* and to congratulate the LRRSA on reaching this achievement. For a volunteer organisation to have reached such a milestone is quite impressive. LR300 celebrates the history of the magazine,

first published in 1961, with a double-page spread (pp22-23).

The "Looking Back" section (p25) includes a short article and accompanying 1937 photo on the Victorian Hardwood Company in Powelltown. The article discusses the development of the logging lines from the sawmills into the forest, and also mentions the 10-mile line that was built in 1912 by an earlier company, the Victorian Powell Wood Processing Company.

Also in "Looking Back", the Huon Timber Company in Geeveston (Tasmania) is the subject of a similar article on p27. A 1909 photo shows a party, including Tasmanian Governor Sir Harry Barron, Lady Clara Barron and Henry Jones (of IXL fame), about to embark on a journey on a train hauled by 1902 locomotive *The Huon*.

Mathew Evans contributes a field report on Harmsworth's sawmill and tramway in Kinglake (Victoria) (p41). Evans is the manager of the fire team at the Kinglake office of the Victorian Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Change and the team uses historic sites as part of its navigation training. The mill was in use until at least 1933. The article includes a modern photo of the remains of a boiler, and an undated historical photo of a tramway that may have been associated with the sawmill.



**SPURLING COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF TASMANIA –
 TIMBER HAULING BY TRACTOR AT MAWBANNA**



Photo by Stephen Spurling III (1876-1962), taken between 1906 and 1930. National Library of Australia, <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/2272924>. Part of the library's "Spurling collection of photographs of Tasmania".