Australian Forest History Society

Newsletter No.94
April 2025

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

Mystery Photograph

This interesting image was copied from the collection of the Cobden & District Historical Society in Western Victoria. It shows two bullock teams hauling logs on conventionally-wheeled carriages over a corduroyed road (the construction of which would be a significant investment for any sawmiller). If relevant to the collection location, it should be in the heart of the former Heytesbury Forest (today, almost totally sacrificed to dairy farms). However, the Heytesbury Forest was largely a mixed-species forest of gums and stringybarks. The forest pictured looks more like a mountain forest. Does any reader recognise this image?

Editor Peter Evans peter@peterevans.com.au
Series Editor Fintán Ó Laighin contact@foresthistory.org.au
AFHS Address PO Box 6113, KINGSTON ACT 2604
Web www.foresthistory.org.au
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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 August 2025.

Input is always welcome.

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

Contributions may be edited.

IN THIS ISSUE

SERIES EDITOR'S NOTE

By Fintán O Laighin

I'll start with a big thank you to Peter Evans for compiling this issue of the newsletter. Peter himself has written a major article, "The First Sawmill in East Gippsland" (pp11-13), and three shorter articles, "Threatened Incendiarism in the Erica Forest District, Victoria" (p6), "A Prisoner-Operated Sawmill" (p10), and "Bark Ringing and Forestry" (p14). All of them are characterised by his excellent research and scholarship.

Talking of excellent research and scholarship, Michael Roche leads with his article on the "Timber Famine and the First New Zealand Forest Planting Boom of 1925" (pp3-6), and David Cameron continues his archaeological exploration of the NSW north coast "Hudson Brothers Narani Sawmill Maritime Heritage Precinct Myall Lake, NSW" (pp7-10), a follow-up article to one that was published in the August 2021 issue of the newsletter. We also have links to Robert Onfray's articles on his website (p10), and John Turnbull's article on what is now called *Eucalyptus regnans* (p15).

My article on novels on the timber industry (pp16-18) stays mostly on topic, although goes off on a couple of tangents, mainly following romance novelist Joyce Dingwell; I hope readers find it interesting. It is its own field of scholarship.

The photo on the front cover is from Peter Evans and he is seeking help in identifying the location (and any other information), while David Cameron asks for information on marine off-cuts dumps located in Australia, and/or any ideas on the methods that might have been employed to construct the timber break walls in the Hudson Brothers' sawmilling operation at Myall Lake. Responses can be e-mailed to the AFHS at contact@foresthistory.org.au.

TIMBER FAMINE AND THE FIRST NEW ZEALAND FOREST PLANTING BOOM OF 1925

By Michael Roche

A century ago, in 1925, Leon McIntosh Ellis, Director of the New Zealand State Forest Service, announced an ambitious plan for planting 300,000 acres (121,406 ha) of exotic forest over the course of a decade. This note revisits the forest situation facing Ellis and examines how he arrived at developing a large-scale exotic afforestation programme.

A Forestry Branch of the Department of Lands and Survey had been established in 1897 with responsibility for afforestation. A Royal Commission on Forestry in 1913 recommended a separate agency and appointment of a professionally qualified forester, and increasing tree planting efforts. Delayed by WWI, administrative separation from Lands and Survey took place in 1919 with Canadian and Toronto forestry graduate Ellis being appointed Director of Forests in 1920[1].

Ellis' initial task was to produce a report on forest conditions in New Zealand, including recommendations for the implementation of scientific state forestry as well as publicising the "forestry problem" facing the Dominion. The latter he did by speaking to various audiences, some not especially supportive of state forestry, such as farming groups and sawmillers, but also by writing in various magazines. In promoting the case for forest management to a somewhat sceptical rural community and business sector, he raised the spectre of a "timber famine" that would be unavoidable by the 1960s without scientific forest management. His "PR" work in highlighting various measures of a timber famine to give impetus to and win acceptance for state forestry is the focus here, with the secondary point being that he ultimately gave greater emphasis to exotic plantation forestry than was his original intent.

For conciseness, attention is given to one graphic, a set of three sketch maps, and one graph all appearing from 1922 to 1923. In an article in *The Forest Magazine of New Zealand*, a periodical for forestry advocates, Ellis dealt evocatively with forest area, deforestation and future timber supplies using a combination of graphics to show the scale of deforestation and emphasise why scientific forest management was essential (Figure 1).

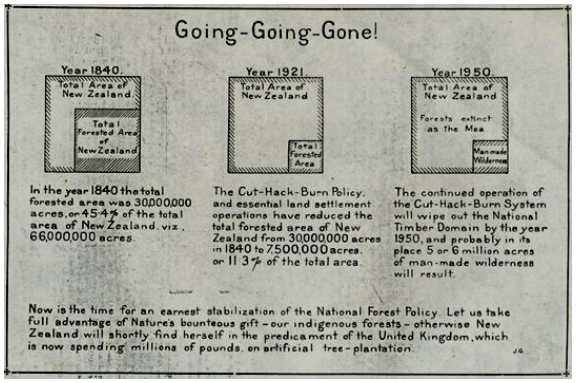

Figure 1: Going-Going-Gone! (Ellis, 1922, 7).

It is worth examining Ellis' data more closely. He uses acres, rather than square miles, perhaps a consequence of his Canadian background. It certainly makes the units involved dramatically large. Ellis calculated 45.4% of land some 30 million acres (12.1 million ha) was forest-covered in 1840, the year New Zealand is incorporated into the British Empire which presents visually as a significant fraction of the proportional square. Sixty-six million acres (103,123 square miles or 26.7 million ha) as the total area of New Zealand, is accurate enough, though the figure alters somewhat depending on whether offshore islands are included. Later calculations would, however, place 1840 forest extent at 53% of land area (Wendelken, 1976, 98).

Representing Ellis' present at the time of writing in 1921, his graphic provides a vivid impression of the rate and scale of deforestation. He claimed 7.5 million acres of forested land remained in 1921, representing only 11.3% of total land area. Not included but stemming from these numbers is an average loss of just under 278,000 acres p.a. There is some careful wording by Ellis in writing "essential land settlement", for the Reform government was largely a farmers' government, members of which saw the forest as an obstacle to settlement. The source of an estimate of 7.5 million acres of forest in 1921 is unclear. There was no field survey to rely on, only a range of estimates, some using extent of forest land released for settlement as well as from sawmill production figures.

Looking to the future a generation hence, his 1950 estimate presents the consequences of "doing nothing" as 5 to 6 million acres of cut over forest becoming "a man-made wilderness", a logged-out area with little or no regeneration of merchantable species. There is some visual slight-of-hand here for the area shown on the graphic for "man-made wilderness" is the same as for 1921, although the area mentioned is only about three-quarters of that, at 5 to 6 million acres. Flipping this figure around, Ellis was envisaging a mere 1.5 to 2.5 million acres of merchantable forest remaining in 1950. To drive home his point in an evocative manner, he inserted the phrase "forests as extinct as the moa".[2] Two final points ought to be made: first, Ellis was signalling that wasteful bush burning needed to be replaced by more efficient methods of forest clearance for settlement that would better utilise the forest as a single harvest; and second, in 1922 he was appealing for public support to implement indigenous forest management in order to avert a large scale and expensive afforestation programme as was then being developed in the United Kingdom, from where Ellis had come to employment in New Zealand. So, if we take him at his word – in 1922 he was not envisaging a large-scale exotic afforestation programme in New Zealand, though he was aware of the impressive growth rates and wood volume produced in existing plantations.

[1] Ellis resigned abruptly in 1928 and moved to Australia working as a forestry consultant before joining APM in 1936.

[2] Flightless birds of the order *Dinornithiformes*, the largest over 2m in height, hunted to extinction in pre-European times.

In 1923, Ellis addressed a different audience and added forest distribution to his discussion in a paper presented to the newly established "Section K Agriculture" of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Founded in 1888 and consciously modelled on the British Association for the Advancement of Science which dated from 1831, in 1923 the AAAS meeting was held in Wellington. Ellis summarised progress towards scientific forestry in New Zealand. He discussed the extent of forests at earlier times as illustrated with three simple maps (Figures 2 to 4). Ellis (1922b) now estimated forest extent at 97,000 square miles or 94% of land area on Māori arrival – which was unspecified but the conventional wisdom of the times placed this in the 14th century. By 1840, Ellis suggested 34,800 square miles (22,272,000 acres) of forest had been cleared, by his calculations some 35.8% of the original forest area.

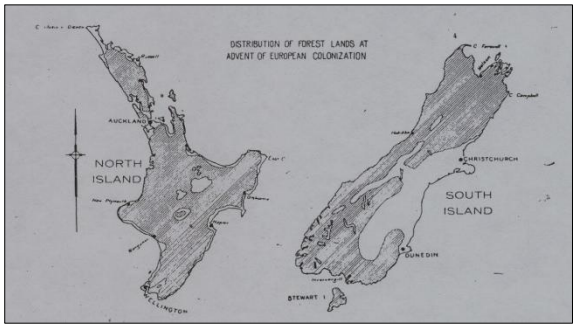

Figure 2: Forest Lands at Advent of European Colonization (Ellis, 1923, 103)

On these maps, Ellis sketched in forest area at "the advent of European colonization" (i.e. 1840), provided a general classification of forestland in 1922, and contrasted these with projected forest and land use for 1950. For 1840, the North Island is shown as virtually all forest-covered, except for a littoral strip along the greater Auckland isthmus, and Ninety Mile Beach (both largely transformed by Māori burning, possibly not fully appreciated in Ellis' time), a small zone around the central volcanoes, and Kaingaroa Plains, a consequence of earlier eruptions on which forest had not re-established. For the South Island, all is forest-covered except for the alpine spine of the island and the drier Canterbury plains and central Otago regions. Forest cover is not defined but the mapped extent would suggest a broader "woody vegetation" classification.

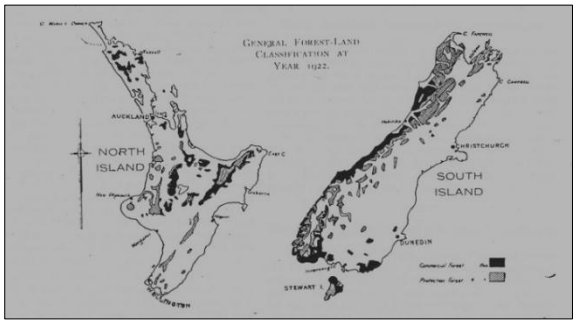

Figure 3: General Forest Land Classification, 1922 (Ellis, 1923, 104).

The figure showing general forest land distinguished protection from production (labelled commercial) forests. What is noticeable is the latter are unevenly concentrated in several regions in both Islands. Ellis reproduced these figures in another article (Ellis, 1923). In the associated text he uses slightly different numbers – of 39,941,000 acres for 1840 and a reduction of 28,441,000 acres to 11,500,000 acres by 1922. Although unstated, this would increase the 1840 forest area to 60.5% of land area. Likewise, his 7,500,000 acres of forest at 11.3% of land area in 1921 has now "increased" to 11,500,000 acres or 17.4% of land area. The latter represents an average clearance figure of 346,841 acres p.a. The basis of the revised data was not discussed but its source will be identified hereafter. Visually at least, the "Advent of European colonization" map suggests much more than Ellis' 45.5% (or as revised 60.4% implied) of land forested in 1840.

His third sketch map shows where Ellis envisaged the State Forest Service effort would be directed over the next 30 years.

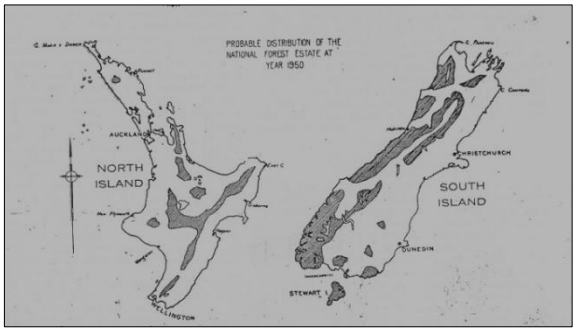

Figure 4: Probable Distribution of Forest Estate at 1950 (Ellis, 1923, 104).

Ellis' anticipated forest estate in 1950 depicted sizable consolidation. A pocket of kauri forestry would remain in North Auckland but other smaller west coast North Island forest areas would be exhausted. A crescent of forest land would however stretch from East Cape to the south of Lake Taupo and into the podocarp forest lands of west of the lake. Creation of this would have involved some replanting, though the likely species and scale were not discussed. The South Island essentially consolidated the 1922 distribution with the addition of plantations in the foothills east of the Southern Alps. The forested Egmont National Park is omitted, though for the South Island the area that would become Fiordland National Park in 1952 is included as forested. These are very large-scale sketch maps and it is unwise to attempt an in-depth assessment based on them alone.

In 1923, Ellis had the opportunity to report to forestry professionals gathering in Canada for the Empire Forestry Conference. The New Zealand report was largely concerned with responding to a series of standardized questions about the state of forestry throughout the empire. It did, however, contain an edited version of some unpublished text by British forester Sir David Hutchins which included a graph showing the decline in forest area since 1840 (Figure 5).

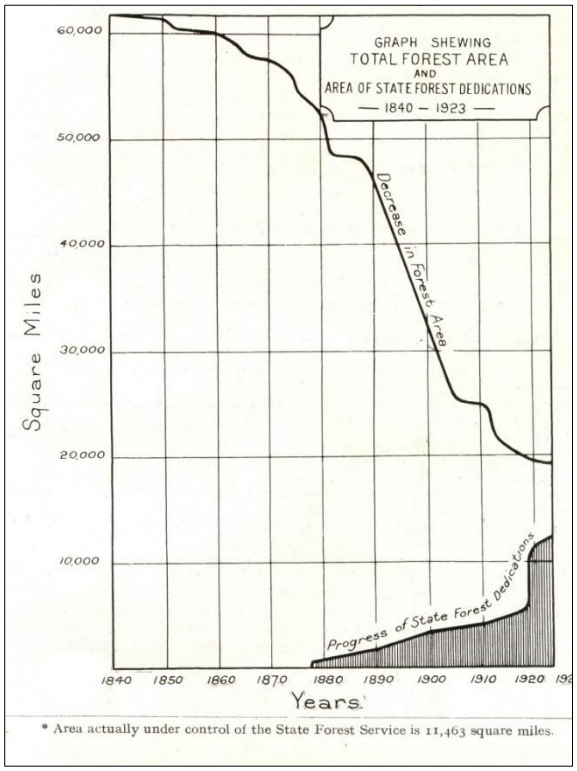

Figure 5: Forest Area and State Forest Dedications (Ellis, 1923).

Hutchins was a Nancy-trained forester who served briefly in India, later holding important positions in Africa. He made detailed reports on various British colonies in Africa, as well as Australia, and New Zealand. Hutchins had died in Wellington in 1920 and presumably this text and figure was amongst the considerable amount of unpublished material from his New Zealand inquiries (Roche, 2005). Hutchins' graph uses square miles compared to Ellis' publications which favoured acres. It placed forest extent in 1840 at about 63,000 square miles (40,320,000 acres) declining to 18,000 square miles (11,520,000 acres) by 1923. The similarity of Hutchins (1923) and Ellis' 1840 area estimates is sufficient when converted to common units to suggest that they were also adopted by Ellis (1922a, 1923). The 1922 forest area is similar with Hutchins suggesting 18,000 square miles (11,520,000 acres) and Ellis, using acres, variously of 10,000,000 to 11,500,000 acres or a maximum of 17,969 square miles or about 17.4% of the forest area. Importantly from Ellis' viewpoint, the State Forest Service by 1922 controlled 11,463 square miles or 63.7% of the remaining 18,000 square miles of forest. This latter figure included a considerable area in national parks beyond State Forest Service jurisdiction, but still left some significant forest areas in private hands. Nevertheless, for an Empire forestry audience, the particularly important part of the graph was the line showing forest area now under State Forest Service administration, virtually doubling since 1920. The precision of some of the estimates to single figure square miles, thousand acres, and 0.1% ought not to be confused with accuracy.

A National Forest Inventory was completed from 1921 to 1923 which, though limited, provided a field-based assessment of remaining forest supplies. It was critical to the imposition of a new tender system for the harvesting of indigenous forests, to the development of forest growth increment tables, forest working plans, and initially underpinned forest planning in New Zealand. On the basis of preliminary National Forest Inventory data, Ellis now had much-improved information allowing him to, in aggregate, assess the "total capital of all standing softwood and hardwood timber at 62,000,000,000 sp ft" (super feet) but recognizing that the annual increment was short of annual consumption "by many million feet" (Ellis, 1924a, 9). Later he would note that this "visible timber supply amounted to 6,500,000 acres, was located primarily in the South Island" (Ellis, 1925, 18) and was a dramatic reduction from earlier estimates of 11,500,000 acres. At this point, remedy could only be found in increased efficiency in utilisation and greater use of hardwoods "otherwise the visible supplies would be exhausted in 35 to 45 years" (i.e. by 1959 to 1969) (Ellis, 1924a, 9). Ellis confidently claimed that "our ecological and silvical investigations will soon unlock the key to successful forest management" (Ellis, 1924b, 3). He could report on a recent increase in state exotic afforestation to 7,200 acres p.a. but, waxing lyrical, he stressed that it was the management of the indigenous forests that would enable New Zealand "to stand alone in the Empire as a self-sustained dominion securing from her own broad acres those precious harvests of timber so vital to the life and prosperity of her as of all nations" (Ellis, 1924a, 3).

The ecological and silvical investigations, however, provided extremely unwelcome news, very limited areas of natural regeneration and slow growth rates (Westland Beech (*Nothofagus*) forests offering the best prospects). In 1925, Ellis would address the Auckland Chamber of Commerce dramatically suggesting that the now 6,500,000 acres of forest would "be finished in fifty years", in 1965, and that "our requirements would be 675,000,000 feet, based on the normal increase. Our problem was to supply these requirements" (Ellis, 1925, 9). The solution now lay in a large-scale state exotic afforestation programme of 300,000 acres to be planted in a decade.

Conversion factors

1 acre is 0.4047 ha
640 acres to 1 square mile or 259 ha
1 superficial foot is 0.0024 m^3

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THREATENED INCENDIARISM IN THE ERICA FOREST DISTRICT, VICTORIA

By Peter Evans

The early 1930s were characterised by high unemployment and fierce competition for available work. Sometimes, the only work available was on government-sponsored relief schemes. Much of this work was in rural districts, and included "forest improvement". As there were more applicants than jobs available, it was inevitable that some would think themselves unfairly treated. The first sign of unrest in the Erica Forest district (Gippsland) was in July 1930, when Bernard Sweeny wrote to the Australian Workers Union complaining that "Dagos" had been given work in preference to those he felt more deserving, himself included. Forester John Youl protested that jobs were allocated in the fairest possible manner having regard to the needs of the prospective employee, his family, and his suitability for the work. The Italians referred to had been in Australia for many years and had applied to become Australian citizens. However, a second letter was received in January 1931. This was anonymous, and repeated the same accusations of unfairness as the first. Ominously, it ended: "If things don't improve, I wonder what will happen when the weather gets hot – Guess".

Three more letters, some anonymous, were received in October 1931. The first began: "If Youl is not shifted from Erica, matches will be used very careless this summer". The second stated: "We have our remedy ... wax matches are cheap". The third concluded: "... we, the unemployed, say the Forest Officer Mr Youl has to leave Erica, or we will be very nasty with the use of matches this summer ... the country is bad enough without any more damage".

Youl hinted that it was possible that several men were conspiring to have him removed from the district due to his belief that they were involved in the illegal cyaniding of possums. However, the implied threat to burn the forest was taken seriously enough for police investigations to be instituted. The handwriting on the letters was compared with the handwriting on applications for relief work, and suspicion was narrowed down to two men. Constable Albert James Prater of Erica interviewed both men, who denied writing the anonymous letters. Prater was of the opinion that, although feelings were undoubtedly running high, the men of the district were so dependent on the forest for their livelihood that there was little danger of them carrying out the threat, and that the letters were largely motivated by their desperation to obtain employment.[1]

Even if they were never put into action, the threats were extremely unfortunate in the light of what was to follow. By early February 1932, the area around Erica was ringed by fire. The worst fire was one which had crossed the Thomson River, but Forests Commission and sawmill employees had managed to re-clear the old Talbot Creek firebreak, and believed that this would allow them to hold the fire away from the Ash forests and the sawmills to the south and east of the river. A strong northerly gale on the evening of Thursday 4 February, however, drove the fire across the break and down on O'Shea & Bennett's mill three miles to the south. At South Cascade Creek, it joined with a fire burning south along the Baw Baw Plateau before sweeping over the mill site. The fire was within three miles of Erica by 11:00am on Friday 5 February when the wind changed and rain began to fall.[2]

O'Shea & Bennett's mill had been constructed in 1924 and was the first to be established in the upper Thomson Valley. It was destroyed in the bushfires of 1926, but had been re-built, financed by a government grant.[3] When, in 1932, it was realised that the mill was again threatened by fire, eight men stayed at the mill in order to defend it. The mill was equipped with a sprinkler system and a good water supply. However, the fire was too fierce to be resisted and, without a dugout, there was little chance of escape for the men. Six of the eight were killed. Two mill-hands, John Cabassi and James Richini, managed to escape although they were badly burned. The mill was completely destroyed. The mill horses were burnt to death and the two logging winches and several miles of outlet tramway damaged.[4]

O'Shea & Bennett's mill, 1932.
Photo by Mervyn Bill

[1] PROV, VPRS 11563/P1, unit 88, item 32/1401.

[2] PROV, VPRS 11563/P1, unit 86, item 32/0413.

[3] McCarthy, M. 1983. *Trestle Bridges and Tramways: The Timber Industry of Erica District 1910-1950*. Light Railway Research Society of Australia, p16.

[4] PROV, VPRS 11563/P1, unit 86, item 32/0413.

HUDSON BROTHERS NARANI SAWMILL MARITIME HERITAGE PRECINCT MYALL LAKE, NSW

By David Cameron

The Hudson Brothers Co. of Sydney, an antecedent of Clyde Engineering, operated an extensive timber cutting, hauling, milling and shipping enterprise based at Neranie Bay near Bungwahl on the Mid North Coast of NSW. The sawmill and village of Narani (as it was spelled originally) was located at the northern-most end of the Myall Lakes system, about 25kms south of Forster. The sawmill at Narani and its tramway network were in operation for most of the period from 1873 until 1906. A steam tramway ran from an amphibious tramway log landing ramp on the south shore of Smiths Lake across a narrow isthmus to the Narani sawmill site. A horse drawn tramway operated in the Tarbuck Scrub transporting logs to Tarbuck Bay for the short haul by steam powered paddlewheel drogher over Smiths Lake. The mill sought quality saw logs, targeting local "iron-bark, black-butt, blue gum, flooded gum, spotted gum, tallow-wood and turpentine". Most of the saw logs were sourced from Hudson's leases in the Tarbuck Scrub (today Wallingat National Park and State Forest).

By December 1881, Hudson's Narani sawmill supported a village of over 300 people. The mill ran two small locomotives on the short 2.2km long 3ft 6in (1067mm) gauge tramway from Smiths Lake. A "steamer", possibly a paddle wheel drogher, and two "punts", likely pole and sail powered drogher barges, were used to haul logs over the lakes to the mill's log landing. Seventy bullocks and 56 horses were engaged in hauling logs overland to the many log landings dotted along the shorelines of Myall and Smiths Lakes. Hudson Brothers also operated five sea-going vessels to ship the milled timber from the Narani mill to their factories in Sydney (Redfern 1866 to 1881 and Granville from 1882) and, from 1883, also to Wickham in Newcastle. These vessels operated from the company's wharves located on the north-eastern tip of Corrie Island at the mouth of the Myall River.

Droghers were commonly used along the Mid-North Coast of NSW to transport logs to sawmills established along the foreshores of the region's rivers and lakes. The term "drogher" is generally used to describe a type of vessel with a shallow draft, usually of timber construction with a flat-bottom barge hull and a blunt prow and stern (although some had a curved stem and/or stern). They were most often powered by a steam engine working a single stern paddlewheel or two stern quarter or beam mounted paddle wheels. The larger ones measured 30m long by 8m across the beam. Smaller ones were half that size, designed for access along narrow waterways into the forests. The logs were loaded transverse to, and extended over, the gunwales so they could be rolled onto and off the bow (see image 1).

The operation of the sawmill is assumed to have been much the same as that of many of the larger mills situated along the Mid North Coast's rivers and lakes. However, the Narani mill site is perhaps regionally unique in one archaeologically significant and fascinating aspect. The archaeological evidence indicates that, apart from what off-cuts were consumed by the boilers of the mill, locomotives and steam vessels, along with the hearths of the Narani villagers, much of the balance of the mill's off-cuts (flitches, hearts and reject dimensional timber) remain largely well preserved in the shallow tannin tinted waters of Neranie Bay. The presence of the preserved off-cuts and other features around the mill site prompted the author to undertake a series of snorkel and boat surveys to commence the process of recording and mapping the locations and extents of the submerged features.

Image 1: A stern dual paddle wheel drogher at a log landing on Myall Lake. This is likely the drogher PS The Brothers*, its wreck can be seen in the shallows at the northern end of Neranie Bay (photo B10399_N0757, Athel D'Ombrain collection [Box Folder B10399], University of Newcastle, Hunter Living Histories, Special Collections https://livinghistories.newcastle.edu.au.*

In March 2024, the author engaged local professional drone operator/photographer Joel Andrews (AndoVolution Australia) to conduct a drone imagery survey of the southern shoreline of Narani Bay to capture hi-resolution imagery of the submerged archaeological features. The terrestrial portions of the site (e.g. sawmill, tramway, village, cemetery) are situated within the Myall Lakes National Park. The marine features from the shoreline out into the bay are located within the Port Stephens – Great Lakes Marine Park (managed by Department of Primary Industries). The drone survey was conducted with the permission of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) (Booti Booti office).

The hi-resolution imagery has assisted the author in identifying and interpreting numerous sub-surface and terrestrial features, as well as identifying new targets for sub-surface investigation. The marine surveys conducted by the author between 2020 and the present have been focused on mapping the extent and typology of the extant submerged archaeological features. The sub-surface investigations and drone imagery have been used to define the indicative extent of the Narani sawmill complex "maritime heritage precinct". The maritime heritage precinct incorporates several archaeological features including (west to east) two stone groin jetties, two milled log off-cuts break walls, dispatch wharf, drogher log landing (now boat ramp), store wharf, dimensional timber off-cuts dump, two drogher wrecks and possibly one or more broken up timber vessels (see image 2).

Image 2: Annotated composite drone image of the Narani sawmill maritime heritage precinct (drone operator/photographer Joel Andrews – AndoVolution Australia, March 2024).

The tags, from left to right, read (in yellow writing) "Timber Breakwalls", "Dispatch Wharf", "Drogher Landing", "Store Wharf", "Western Wreck", "Possible wrecks", "Timber off-cuts dump" and "Eastern wreck", and (in white writing) "Sawmill" and "Tramway"

The Hearts Point timber break walls (east and west) are constructed from layers of milled log hearts, large flitches and larger dimensional off-cuts processed at the adjacent mill which operated between 1873 and 1906. The break walls run parallel with each other, shaped like two fingers, slightly overlapping each other at their inner edges. They are comprised of tens of thousands of timbers that have been systematically deposited to form low break walls, presumably to protect shipping using the adjacent mill dispatch wharf from the often very rough wind chop generated on the shallow waters of the bay. The break walls therefore performed the dual purpose as both a convenient timber refuse dump and wind chop break wall.

Hi-resolution drone imagery reveals details on the depositional sequence and structure of the break walls which are laid out in a series of fan shaped radiating layers topped with others running longitudinally. The drone imagery indicates that the western break wall was laid out after the eastern break wall as the timbers on the eastern side of the west break wall extend over portions of the western side of the east break wall (see image 3).

Image 3: Composite drone image of the Narani sawmill "Hearts Point" log off-cuts break walls (photo Joel Andrews, March 2024).

Together the break walls measure about 55m wide and extend almost 110m into the bay from the shoreline at the north-west corner of the mill site. The break walls are approximately 1m high near the shoreline (in 0.5 to 1m of water) and up to 3m high at their western terminus further into the lake (2.5 to 3m deep). The log hearts and dimensional off-cuts vary in size between approximately 100mm to 400mm wide and 100mm to 400mm thick. Most of the off-cuts measure at least 3m long, with many being 4m to 6m long (see image 4).

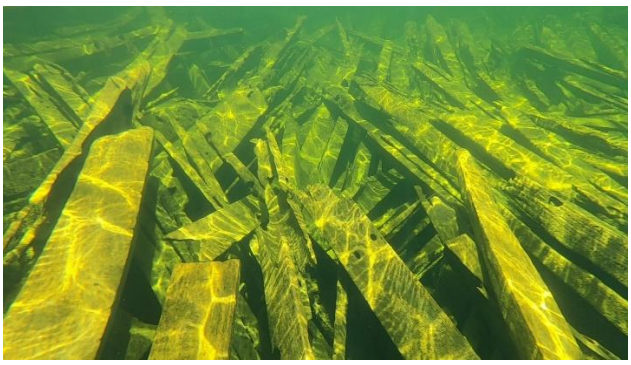

Image 4: Underwater view of some of the well preserved timbers at the western sawmill off-cuts break wall (photo David Cameron, November 2020).

The milled timber off-cuts that form the beak walls were laid out in a very deliberate and systematic fashion. Their distribution demonstrates planning, symmetry and order. The construction of the break walls was a process of considered engineering design rather than haphazard disposal. The methods by which they were deposited are not yet understood. There are no visible extant walkways or tramways to indicate that the timbers were either carried out by hand or rolled out on trolleys. The timbers may have been laid out using an aerial cable way. However, it is likely that most of the off-cuts were laid in position using a cable winch and samson pole derrick crane from the deck of a paddlewheel drogher.

The nearby Neranie Bay south dimensional timber off-cuts dump feature covers an area of about 0.8ha and lies in less than 1.5m of water in a cove just east of the mill and store wharf, opposite the Smiths Lake to Narani tramway terminus (see image 5). Two drogher wrecks (names unknown) have been recorded close to the shore, partially overgrown with sedge and melaleuca trees (see image 6). The wrecks are hemmed in by the mill off-cuts that fan out in an arc up to 80m from the southern shoreline. The lower hull portion of a third drogher wreck, the PS (Paddle Steamer) *The Brothers*, rest well preserved in the shallows a few hundred meters away at the northern end of the bay.

Image 5: Drone image of the western end of the dimensional timber off-cuts dump on the south shore of Neranie Bay. This image covers an area of approximately 40m by 30m (photo Joel Andrews, March 2024).

Image 6: Drone image of the eastern drogher wreck located at the eastern end of the southern shore of Neranie Bay (photo Joel Andrews, March 2024).

The dimensional timber off-cuts dump is comprised mostly of sawn dimensional timber, with perhaps 10 percent showing evidence of being drilled, morticed or having iron fixtures. The timbers generally lie flat on the bed of the bay. The timbers appear to be stacked two or three deep. The timbers vary in size and shape, almost all being milled. Most are lengths of between 2m to 8m long (most less than 4m) with widths of between 50mm to 200+mm by 25mm to 200mm thick.

The presence of several long keelson stringers, and dozens of curved convex and concave milled blocks or ribs not associated with the nearby drogher wrecks, indicates that one or more drogher/punt wrecks may have been broken up at the site.

The eastern off-cuts dump also presents its own questions of design and deposition methodology. The dimensional off-cuts and smaller width flitches are laid out in overlapping layers running, seemingly in random orientations, being parallel, perpendicular or oblique to the shoreline. Other timbers appear to have been dumped randomly or otherwise moved about by wind chop and storm currents in the shallows. The deposition appears to have commenced at the western end of the shoreline (on the eastern side of the store wharf) and proceeded east along the shoreline shallows and then north out into the deeper water.

One puzzling feature is the dozens of vertical rectangular pickets (most with sharp pointed ends resulting from exposure weathering) are arranged in seemingly random lines, most oriented parallel with the shore (see image 7). Some rise just 100mm above the mostly flat bed of timber off-cuts. Other pickets extend up a metre or more from the bottom, their weathered tips often exposed above the surface.

The alignment and spacing between each picket, generally between 500mm to 600mm, and between the rows of pickets, varying between 200mm to 1.5m, suggest they may have been driven into the soft lakebed as temporary revetment-like structures to hold the deposited timbers in place to settle on the bottom so as not to be washed about by wind chop. Indeed, numerous cobbles and boulders (200mm to 400mm diameter) are strewn about the site, appearing to have been used as cribbing ballast to weigh the timbers down in place.

Image 7: An example of the short lines vertical pickets with lengths of milled dimensional timber and flitches deposited between them at the eastern off-cuts dump in south Neranie Bay – range pole colour scale in 20cm increments (photo David Cameron, December 2024).

The function of the vertical pickets is uncertain. They have a superficial appearance of the internal hull ribs of a timber vessel wreck. However, upon closer inspection their lines are more random and do not connect with any obvious hull timbers, keelsons or stringers. They may possibly be posts used to support temporary timber pier walkways that could have been used to deposit the off-cuts into the bay. However, there is no evidence of any associated remnants of cross-bracing or deck planking.

The orientation, layering and depth of water indicates that the off-cuts were deposited in a planned and systematic manner: at first from the shoreline and then later most likely from the deck of a punt or drogher working in the shallows.

The state of preservation of the submerged timbers at both off-cuts sites is remarkable. Many of the timbers have the appearance of having been deposited only a few decades ago, rather than from between 120 to 150 years ago. Their good state of preservation is due largely to the bio-chemical characteristics of the tannin tinted clear waters, stable soft sand bottom and negligible tidal action of the northern end of the Myall Lakes system.

The water level at the northern end of Myall Lake is largely dependent upon rainfall, slowly rising up to 1m or so after prolonged heavy rain. The waters of Neranie Bay are generally shallow (0.3m at the shoreline to no deeper than 2-3m or so 100m into the lake) with a sandy silty bottom covered with a thin layer of decomposing organic matter closer to the shoreline. In combination these characteristics help to preserve the timber from the worst ravages of exposure weathering, rot and borers.

The submerged timber features associated with the former Hudson Brothers Narani sawmill site comprise a rare maritime industrial heritage landscape of considerable local and regional cultural heritage and archaeological significance. The underwater marine heritage precinct is something of a "time capsule" preserving numerous features associated with the operation of waterborne transportation of logs and milled timber and the management of the voluminous sawmill waste produced by a large late nineteenth century sawmill. The author would welcome information on any other marine off-cuts dumps located in Australia that readers may know about or if they have any ideas on the methods that might have been employed to construct the timber break walls.

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Robert Onfray's Blogs and Other Writing

Robert Onfray continues to provide monthly updates on two different topics each month – stories about travelling around Australia, and on forestry. They are published on his website www.robertonfray.com. His website includes details of how to subscribe to his e-mail list, and he also has a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/robertonfraywriter.

The following articles on Forestry have been published since our December 2024 issue.

January:	Debunking false claims about bushfire risk and native forest logging in Australia
January (no. 2):	The Cricket bat – a journey from the backyard to Test matches
February:	The great carbon credit con: A shonky system exposed
March:	A case study in folly #4: The price of ignoring fire risks
April:	Forester's unique legacy in Queensland

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.

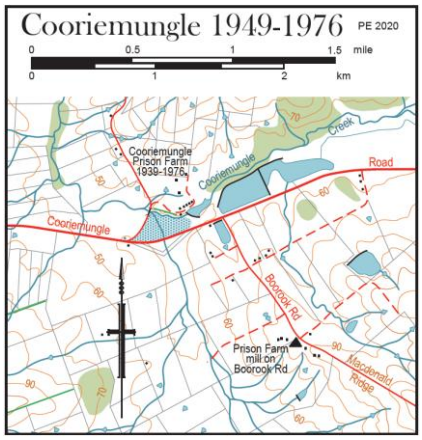
A post on his Facebook page on 27 January 2025 reports that he is on the home stretch of publishing his book on the forestry history of Fraser Island. All 22 chapters have drafted, and he is now reviewing each chapter to perfect the grammar and details.

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

A Prisoner-Operated Sawmill

By Peter Evans

Cooriemungle, 15km north-east of Port Campbell in Victoria's Western District, had an unusual prisoner-operated sawmill. In the local First Nations language, "Cooriemungle" means "people of the wilderness", a fitting description of the original Heytesbury forest (in the remnants of which the mill was situated). The Cooriemungle prison farm was a minimum security prison established in 1939 under the auspices of Victorian attorney general Henry Stephen Bailey. Only low-risk inmates were housed, and the prisoners were put to work preparing land for farming to be sold to potential settlers. As a result, the buildings were designed to be portable and moved as required until 1946, when the camp became semi-permanent. A small sawmill was built in 1949 just south of a bend on the Boorook Road, and powered using an agricultural tractor. The mill had only a single bench for both breaking-down and ripping, and could only cut logs under 2 feet 6 inches in diameter. The better-quality timber cut from the surrounding forest (taken mainly off McDonalds Ridge during the summer) was either used at Cooriemungle or dispatched to other Victorian prisons for use there. The mill employed six prisoners under the direction of a prison officer and, for the year 1952, cut a total of 25,000 super feet.



The existence of this mill posed problems for the Forests Commission. While the Penal Department controlled the land (and forest) on which it operated, the small size of the mill meant that the larger trees were being potentially wasted. Eventually an agreement was reached whereby Forests Commission licensees could take the larger logs, extending the life of the privately-owned sawmills, and ensuring better utilisation of the timber as the land was cleared for settlement.

By 1976 the prison farm was in the process of being shut down and only six prisoners were left of the maximum accommodation of 60. By the end of the year, the sawmill had been dismantled and was re-erected on land at Sunbury. The Cooriemungle prison farm was formally closed on 1 December 1977 and, after much furore about its future, eventually become a commercial camp site now known as "Camp Cooriemungle".[1]

[1] PROV, VPRS 11563/P1, unit 425, item 58/1191; *The Argus*, Friday 28 April 1939, p7; Wednesday 18 October 1939, p9; Kivimets, L., 1990. *A History of the Cooriemungle Prison Farm.* No publication details, *passim.*

THE FIRST SAWMILL IN EAST GIPPSLAND

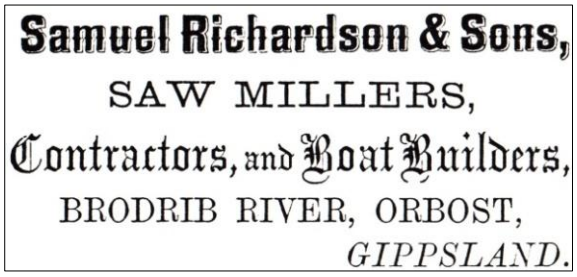
By Peter Evans

Samuel Richardson & Sons' sawmill site in East Gippsland is on the east bank of the Brodribb River just south of Lake Curlip in East Gippsland (AMG 66 06 38940 58 19430). The site is accessed by foot from the southern end of Tabbara Road, and is wholly within the Lake Curlip Wildlife Reserve.

History

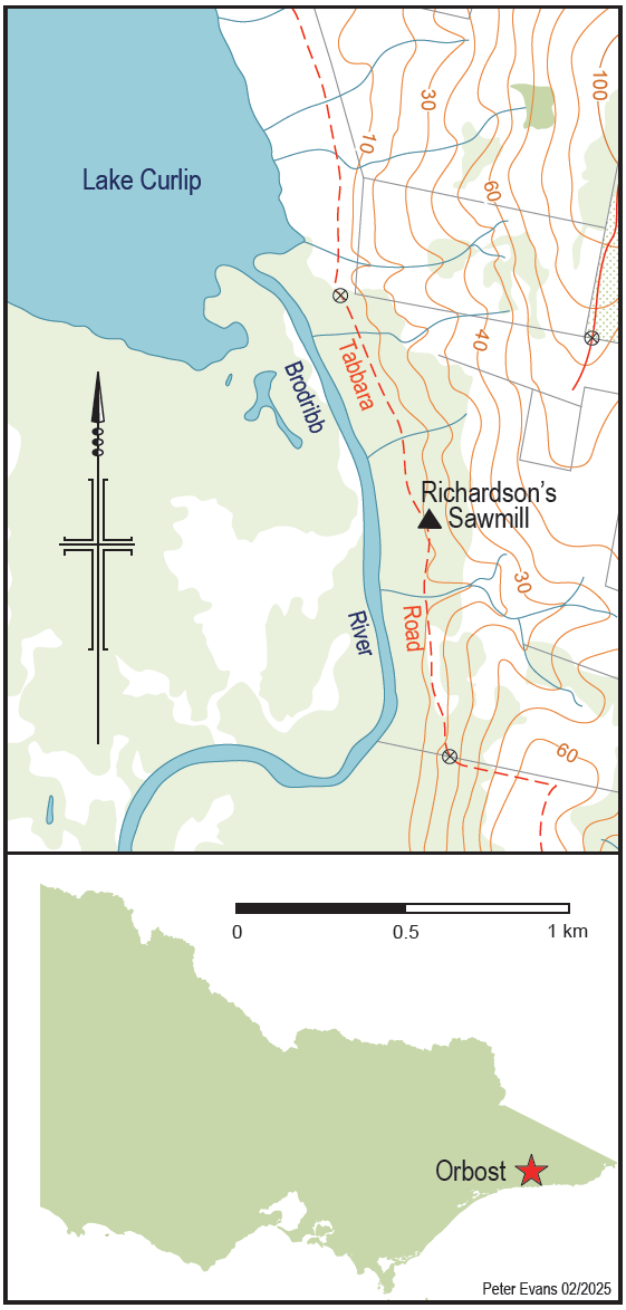
Samuel George Richardson was born in England in 1821 and later migrated to Australia with his growing family. Richardson settled at Bolwarrah near Ballarat in Victoria and, by the early 1860s, had established the Utopia Sawn Shingle Mill on the Devils River at Bolwarrah (AMG66 02 40300 58 45300 approximately). The area was cut-out by 1872 [1] but, for many years, Richardson maintained an interest in the site where he had a seven-roomed house with an orchard and garden.[2]

In October 1877 Richardson's sons left for East Gippsland looking for land to select. They settled on an area near Orbost. At that time there was no sawmill in the district, and Samuel Richardson came to Orbost and made a survey of the timber around Lake Curlip and the Brodribb River in August 1881. The results were obviously promising, as he arranged to ship a sawmill plant to Orbost on the schooners *Maffra* and *Glengarry* for the sum of £50. The plant was loaded on 25 October 1881 and, after a stormy voyage, arrived on 25 November at the site chosen for the mill at Tabbara on the Brodribb River. The first sawn timber was delivered to Carl Grove for his hop kilns in January 1882. It would seem that, initially, Richardson marketed his timber locally but, in October 1882, *Mohawk*, *Enterprise*, *Warhawk* and *Lady of the Lake* loaded timber at Tabbara bound for Melbourne.[3]


Samuel Richardson & Sons,
SAW MILLERS,
Contractors, and Boat Builders,
BRODRIB RIVER, ORBOST,
GIPPSLAND.

PROV, VPRS 440, unit 136, item 551/47 letterhead.

Shipping to and from the Snowy River had to contend with a dangerous and constantly shifting bar across the entrance at Marlo. Masters generally appear to have preferred to use less risky ports, and Richardson complained that it was difficult to get vessels to take his timber away from the Snowy River. A move to a new site north of Orbost was cancelled for this very reason, and the mill was closed and the men discharged. However, Richardson retained the site on the Brodribb River on the strength of its future prospects. He described the Orbost district as "Terra Incognita" and "almost beyond the bounds of civilised life" but acknowledged that this would not always be so. He managed to persuade the officials of the Lands Department to reduce the rent for the idle mill site from £16 to £10 per year for a period of six months.[4]



The impetus to continue with the enterprise was probably a contract to supply 20,000 paving blocks for Melbourne streets in August 1883. The ink was hardly dry on the contract when Richardson met with Orbost pioneer James Cameron in an effort to overcome the shipping problem.[5] The Snowy River Shipping Company Limited was registered on 29 August 1884. The purpose of the company was to be "the carriage of goods and

[1] Houghton, N., 1980. *Timber and Gold.* Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Surrey Hills, p 35.

[2] PROV, VPRS 440, unit 346, item 1815/99.

[3] Gilbert, B., 1972. *Personalities and stories of the early Orbost District.* published by the author, pages 30-31.

[4] PROV, VPRS 440, unit 136, items 548/47 and 551/47.

[5] Gilbert, *ibid*, p31.

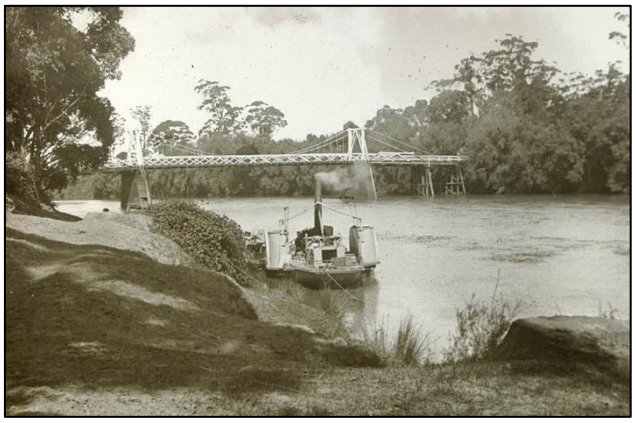
produce of any and every description in ships or boats between the Snowy River in Gippsland and such other places as the company shall from time to time determine". The capital of the company was arranged in 1000 shares of £1 each, of which 180 were subscribed on registration. At fifty shares each, Samuel Richardson and W.J. Clarke (Bt) were the largest individual shareholders. By 1886 Richardson had disappeared from the share register, but his purpose had been accomplished. Under the management of Henry James, the Snowy River Shipping Company went from strength to strength, acquiring the paddle steamer *Lady of the Lake* and the schooner *Orbost*. Later, the ketch *Endeavour*, schooner *Templar* and paddle steamer *Nell* were added to the fleet. Despite ongoing difficulties with the bar at the mouth of the river, the company, at the peak of its success, was returning 30% on the shareholders' investment by July 1888. Most of the freight was maize, wattle bark, hides and tallow.[1]

Paradoxically, the revival brought about by the availability of shipping seems to have stimulated demand for timber for local consumption rather than for export. Timber was supplied for bridges, schools and hotels as well as to local farmers. Boat building was added to the activities of Samuel Richardson & Sons, but seems initially to have consisted only of small barges, punts and a snagging boat. A new boiler was installed at the mill on 12 September 1885 and, in the following two days, Samuel Richardson proudly recorded in his diary the production of 8580 [lineal?, super?] feet of sawn boards and scantling.[2] Although the mill operated only intermittently, Richardson could claim that it had transformed Orbost from a collection of bark and sapling huts to a township of sawn timber buildings housing around 150 people. Land in the district had risen from an average of £5 per acre to £144 per acre since the mill had been established.[3]

Such a steady local market attracted a competitor. James Nixon established his own sawmill at the head of Snaggers Lane in 1886 (approximately AMG66 06 28500 58 24850 – almost within the Orbost township), hoping to supply local needs. The mill was smaller than that owned by Richardson, whose improvements were valued at £1090 against Nixon's £250. Nixon's mill had closed by September 1888, but Nixon remained in occupation, using it as a residence site.[4]

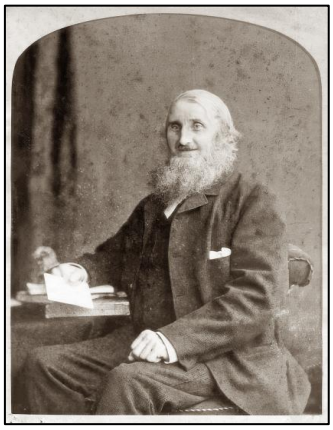
Richardson's mill continued to meet local needs until the dying gasp of the land boom saw the area around the mill surveyed into township blocks in April 1889. Much of the area around the mill was selected and the timber ringbarked, although the blocks in the new township were largely ignored except by speculators. By the end of 1889, the mill was forced to close for lack of raw material. Richardson attempted to buy the block on which the mill was situated but was put off by the high upset price. The mill and its residences were the only improvements in the whole township and were valued at £1090:

- Mill shed, all wood 100 ft by 38 ft £150.
- Sawmill plant complete & engineers shop £700.
- Tramway, four chains £80.
- Men's hut and store room £60.
- Hut[s], all wood £40.
- Blacksmith's shop, fitted [out] £50.
- Garden £10.[5]



PS Curlip *on the Snowy River near Orbost. Photograph by John Henry Harvey, State Library of Victoria image H2009.100/119.*

Before this problem could be resolved, the keel of the paddle-steamer *Curlip* was laid on 14 October 1889. Launched on 6 February 1890, she was to be Samuel Richardson's final achievement. The small steamer of 10 tons would be the mainstay of water traffic on the Snowy River for thirty years until she was wrecked at Marlo in 1919. Richardson lived to see the successful launch, but was himself lost in a boating accident at the mouth of the Snowy on 12 November 1890.[6] After his death the mill site was purchased in the name of Samuel Richardson & Sons on 21 December 1892. The title was then transferred to Alan John Richardson who held the site until at least 1913.[7]



Left: Samuel Richardson in later life.
Courtesy Orbost & District Historical Society.

Physical description

The most prominent feature at the site is a single sawdust trench. The north and south boundaries of the mill are defined by what appear to be drainage trenches as they lie just outside the stated dimensions of the mill shed obtained from the Lands Department file. The boiler and

[1] PROV, VPRS 932, unit 849.
[2] Gilbert, *ibid*, p31.
[3] PROV, VPRS 440, unit 136, item 551/47.
[4] PROV, VPRS 5357, unit 420, item 702/93.
[5] PROV, VPRS 440, unit 136, item 551/47.
[6] Gilbert, *ibid*, p32.
[7] PROV, VPRS 440, unit 136, item 551/47.

engine appear to have been sited below the mill where there is an accumulation of stone and brick, some metal plate and a section of cylindrical iron plate. The cylinder has a single riveted longitudinal lap joint and a circular section of angle-iron riveted to one end.

This is either the remains of a heavy-duty water tank or a very lightly constructed boiler. The site has been partially vandalised by bottle hunters.

The technology installed at the mill is difficult to determine. The recorded output of the mill of 8580 [lineal?, super?] feet of sawn boards and scantling over two days raises as many questions as it answers. If the stated dimensions are in totals of lineal feet this equates to roughly 2910 super feet or 1455 super feet per day. If the stated dimensions are in totals of super feet, this equates to 4290 super feet per day. The first total would equate to a reasonably efficient "spot" mill, while the second would require a "full" mill. There would be just room enough to place a "full" mill within the foundations of the mill but the expected square excavation for a vertical breaking-down saw is absent. Therefore, if this was a "full" mill it used a [probably single] circular breaking-down saw. The difference in valuation between Richardson's and Nixon's plants (£700 against only £250 for Nixon's mill) also points towards Richardson's plant being larger and more complex. This aspect of the site definitely requires more research, starting with Richardson's diaries which are believed to be extant. The four chains (80.44 metres) of tramway is equally problematic. The purpose of this tramway could only be to connect the mill on the edge of the hillside with the jetty where the timber was loaded for both local and distant consumption. Between the mill and the edge of the Brodribb River lies a swamp. There is no sign of any tramway across the swamp immediately opposite the mill.

However, 70 metres north of the centre of the mill is a causeway with what appears to have a foundation of roughly broken local red granite (which outcrops naturally on the hillside some 500 metres north of the mill). At the end of the causeway are four piles and one beam of what appears to have been a jetty. The causeway is currently used as a four-wheel-drive track to provide access to the river. The length of the causeway is 86 metres which accords well with four chains of tramway. If this was in fact the route of the tramway, how was the timber moved the seventy metres north from the lower side of the mill? It would seem that there could have been no tramway running north from the mill – there is no sign of a definite formation and the topography dictates that such a tramway could not have turned west towards the river as the curvature would have been too sharp even for narrow-gauge trucks with short wheelbases. Even if this could be accomplished, it would nearly double the total length of the tramway to eight chains. While the causeway was very likely created as the foundation for almost exactly four chains of tramway, the full operational details of the site will only be teased out by further historical and archaeological research.

The final elements of the site include a flat area fifty metres south of the mill which may have been the site of the huts mentioned in the Lands Department files, and a number of shallow and ill-defined snig tracks leading into the mill site from the east.

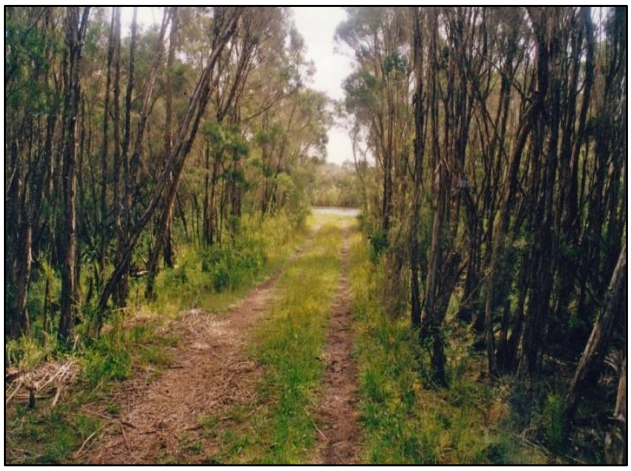
Condition and Integrity

The only major damage to the integrity of the site appears to have been caused by bottle collectors. It seems incredible that this site has survived undamaged for over a century only to be vandalised by selfish souvenir hunters.

Statement of Significance

Samuel Richardson and Sons' sawmill site encompasses both the first sawmill and the first timber tramway in East Gippsland. It made a major contribution to the settlement of the lower valley of the Snowy River in general, and Orbost and Marlo in particular. Samuel Richardson was one of the promoters of, and an early major investor in, the Snowy River Shipping Company Limited, which enabled East Gippsland to take its share in the boom of the 1880s. The site was where the timber for punt and barge construction was cut for assembly at Richardson's slips at Corringle. Richardson was responsible for the construction of the paddle-steamer *Curlip* which made a major contribution to river trade on the lower Snowy River until 1919. The site is therefore of regional significance. The site has a reasonable degree of integrity and the ability to provide further information about this early East Gippsland industrial enterprise.

The site exceeds thresholds in AHC criteria A.4 (first sawmill and tramway in far East Gippsland, contributed to the establishment of Orbost and Marlo as centres of population, operated for eight years); C.2 (potential to provide further information about the operation of the site, demonstrates the way in which early sawmilling in Gippsland was closely tied to sea transport); and H.1 (associated with an Orbost pioneer whose activities in helping to found the Snowy River Shipping Company made a major contribution to the establishment of the lower Snowy River as an agricultural region). The site is therefore recommended for addition to the Register of the National Estate.



Causeway to the Brodribb River, which may mimic the route of Richardson's tramway. Photo Peter Evans.

"BARK RINGING AND FORESTRY"

By Peter Evans

The following is taken from the *Mount Alexander Mail*, Saturday 7 April 1888, p2. The writer, John William Horwood[1], was the owner of the Albion Foundry in Castlemaine, which manufactured mining and agricultural machinery for that and neighbouring goldfields, with a notable sideline in bells for post offices, fire brigades and churches. He was the son of Lancashire-born and pioneering Adelaide foundryman Joel Horwood, and brother of the perhaps better-known Joel Horwood Junior of Horwood's Foundry, Bendigo. In his leisure time, John William Horwood devoted his time to forest culture on his land at Walmer, nine miles distant from Castlemaine.[2] What sets him apart from his contemporaries with a strong connection to the mining industry is his concern for the preservation and expansion of forest cover.

> "It is a well-known fact that the foliage of trees is about 20 degrees lower than the temperature of the surrounding air in warm weather, and the cooling effect on the (winds?) naturally tends to increase the rainfall, and it is a known fact that since the systematic tree planting has been commenced in the large western states of America, the rainfall has gradually but steadily increased, and the frequency of those terrible windstorms – termed "northers" there, and "blizzards" further north, has been perceptibly reduced. But of the baneful effects of reckless and indiscriminate "clearing" or destruction, all observant students of forestry are unanimously agreed, and those living in Victoria have a need to look for illustration and proof to the arid and rocky hills of Spain and France, where the progenitors of the celebrated merino once de-pastured. Ballarat, according to George Smith, the well-known nurseryman, would grow apricots and peaches in the cool air 25 years ago. Daylesford, according to Hon. W.E. Stanbridge, a close observer of nature, would do the same. Mr J. Marlow of Castlemaine gives similar facts locally. Again, in the effect of the matter of the rainfall changes I may illustrate by the following – my neighbour has a high hill that forms a watershed for a valley in my ground. In the valley a few years hence there was not the faintest sign of a scour, or anything to ever show there had been floods down the valley, and residents of 23 years standing, state that they had never seen any. Almost ten years ago the hill referred was rigorously bark or sap rung, and three times during the last five years there have been injurious and unprecedented floods down the valley, washing down wire fences, injuring dams, washing away the best soil, &c, and leading my worthy neighbour in describing it to me to exclaim "Now is it not strange we never used to have it like this until lately, there must be great change coming over the climate", to which I replied "Now, your hill used to be a sheepskin with the wool upwards, and the rainwater took a long time to get down the gullies. Now it is a sheepskin with the wool downwards, and now all the water gets down to the valley at once, and it will be worse yet". Without doubt, every tree stem acts as a downpipe, carrying to a large extent the water into the soil instead of leaving it upon the soil, hence the primary effect of forests in making streams regular and not intermittent. But the great and grave question is how is forest planting to be encouraged or increased? To this I answer, certainly not by the average selector. For he has neither the capital, the time, the information, nor the inclination necessary, and unless encouragement is given by the State to capitalists, or businessmen of moderate means or enthusiasm, I have little hope of forestry making any great progress for many years. There are several ways of doing this, and considering that from its nature forest planting means the laying out of money with no hope of immediate return, it is the duty of the government to help in any legitimate way possible. The first I would mention is, that for land taken up and applied to "bona-fide" purposes the non-resident penalty be excepted, fee-simple being granted for 20 yearly payments of 1s per acre. After years of expenditure in planting forest trees it might safely be concluded that the selector would be honest to himself and to the State. High-class agricultural land need not be let under the clause at all, but there are thousands of acres in the mining districts where this might be tried with safety. Secondly, the State might encourage by liberal grants of seedling trees, and seeds known by the Department to be suitable for the persons applying, as in South Australia. Thirdly, by the lavish dissemination of information in a cheap form bearing upon the subject, of such a practical character that an ordinary selector would know how to treat the seeds or trees committed to his care, as is done in America. Fourthly, by throwing open all the timbered hills in the mining districts for selection (under the surveillance of officers) for anyone willing to plant new or conserve indigenous trees, allowing such small percentage of clearing as would afford sustenance for a few animals, and the formation of a retired forest home. That need not exceed one acre in thirty for cultivation and building purposes. There are a number of beautiful spots where romantic, healthy, and happy homes might be established amongst hills and valleys; and this, or something similar, will alone stop the disgraceful destruction of young trees which goes on in our mining districts".

[1] The portrait of John William Horwood is taken from the security photographs for the Centennial Exhibition held in Melbourne in 1888, State Library of Victoria image H28190/340.

[2] Sutherland, A., 1888. *Victoria and its Metropolis, Past and Present.* McCarron Bird & Company, Melbourne, Volume II, p246.

WHO NAMED AUSTRALIA'S TALLEST TREE?

By John Turnbull

This article was first published by the Friends of ACT Trees in its March 2025 newsletter *https://sites.google.com/site/factacanberra/news* (issue no. 72). It is reprinted with permission.

The tallest tree in Australia is a eucalypt named "Centurion". It was found in 2008 in the Arve Valley in Tasmania by staff of state-owned logging company Sustainable Timber Tasmania (STT) who were mapping timber resources. It was measured in 2018 using ground-based laser technology as 100.5 metres (329.7 feet) in height.

The common name for this species is "mountain ash". This name refers to its habitat and the similarity of its timber to the ash (genus *Fraxinus*). In different places and at different times it has been called white mountain ash, Victorian oak, Tasmanian oak, Australian oak, blackbutt, swamp gum and stringy gum. The mountain ash occurs only in the moist mountain areas of Victoria and at lower altitudes in Tasmania.

This tree was originally named as a variety of *Eucalyptus amygdalina*, a Tasmanian black peppermint, but in 1870 it was separated as a distinct species by Ferdinand von Mueller and named *Eucalyptus regnans*. The specific name is based on the Latin regnare (to rule) acknowledging its dominance in the forest as a truly majestic tree.

Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von Mueller (1825-1896), was born in Germany. He qualified as a pharmacist and became an enthusiastic and well-informed botanist. He came to Australia for health reasons in 1847. In Adelaide he worked occasionally as a pharmacist but devoted most of his time to investigating the South Australian flora. In 1853 he became the first Government Botanist of Victoria.

Mueller travelled extensively to explore the Australian flora and named many species, especially eucalypts. He set up the National Herbarium of Victoria, the first in Australia. Another outstanding achievement was development of an extensive network of plant collectors and correspondents. In particular he encouraged women to collect and send him specimens. At a time when women had little recourse to science his network of ladies was extraordinary.

He took a scientific interest in Victorian forests, recognised the dangers of indiscriminate clearing of land and advocated the establishment of local forest boards in an effort to ensure future timber supplies. He also distributed thousands of living plants and seeds and many Victorian country towns have parks based on these plants. He encouraged the development of the eucalypt oil industry in Victoria and contributed greatly to medical science by writing about the medical properties of Australian plants.

Mueller was a complex man with many interests. His interests included the exploration of New Guinea and Antarctica and he served on the first Australian Antarctic Exploration Committee. As a member of the Victorian Acclimatisation Society he distributed seeds of the Tasmania blue gum (*E. globulus*) around the world and promoted the planting of eucalypts. He contributed to discussions on acclimatisation and the introduction of fauna and flora to Australia. He is often credited with the spread of blackberry!

The naming of mountain ash (E. *regnans*) is just one of many lasting legacies of a man who has been called "the greatest Australian botanist of the 19th century".

ABC RADIO NATIONAL "CONVERSATIONS WITH RICHARD FIDLER"

8 April 2025: The wisdom of an ancient Pencil Pine

Nature writer, Andrew Darby spent more than 20 years as a Fairfax correspondent based in Tasmania. His stories involved the natural beauty of the bush, including visits to wild places and to the people who protect them, but it was deadline-driven and he couldn't spend the time he wanted to.

In 2017 Andrew was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. He underwent immunotherapy and was given a maximum 18-months to live. It has been eight years since he entered his "second life".

Andrew was determined to fully inhabit his beloved Tasmanian bush, so he went by himself to commune with ancient trees. These are some of the world's oldest surviving trees, like King's Lomatia; some of the biggest trees, like a 60-metre-tall eucalyptus known as The Vibe Tower; and Andrew's favourite, the dignified Pencil Pine.

www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/conversations/andrew-darby-ancient-trees-wild-tasmania-nature/105130438

Further information

The Ancients: Discovering the world's oldest surviving trees in wild Tasmania is published by Allen & Unwin. *(See also p20 of the newsletter for more information on the book.)*

AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE, TOWNSVILLE, JUNE/JULY 2025

The annual conference of the Australian Historical Association (AHA) will be held in Townsville from Monday 30 June to Thursday 3 July 2025, hosted by James Cook University and Central Queensland University. The conference will again include a "Green Stream", presented by the Australian & Aotearoa New Zealand Environmental History Network. *(And thanks to the network for advice of the conference.)*

The theme for the conference is "Looking Up". Historians engage in many forms of looking up. The popular image of a historian is a person with their head down in the depths of an archive or library looking up books and documents. However, historians are at their most impactful when they also look up at the world around them and connect their work to contemporary issues. The first historians and custodians of what is now Australia literally looked up to the stars that served as calendars and markers of the passage of time. From ancient times to the present, historians have looked up at the power structures that shape society.

More information

- www.jcu.edu.au/events/2025/june/australian-historical-association-conference
- https://theaha.org.au
- www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org

NOVELS ON THE FOREST INDUSTRY – AN UPDATE

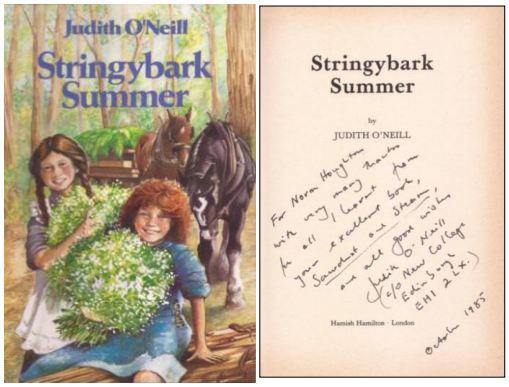
By Fintán O Laighin

The article on Joyce Dingwell's novels on the timber industry in the December 2024 newsletter (p18) has resulted in some more finds, some more information, and the need to correct a couple of things.

The article was inspired by an e-mail I received from John Dargavel in which he said that Katharine Susannah Prichard's 1926 work *Working Bullocks* and Alison Gibbs's 2021 book *Repentance* were the only novels he could think of that had the (Australian) forest industry as a setting. I told him that Australian author Joyce Dingwell had written at least two such novels – *The House in the Timberwoods* (1959) and *The Timber Man* (1964) – both published originally by British publisher Mills & Boon, but subsequently by Canadian publisher Harlequin.

Norman Houghton has added another, *Stringybark Summer* by Judith O'Neill, a children's book published in 1985 and the second of her nine novels. He writes that "The background is based on Henry's No 1 Mill at Forrest (in the Otway Ranges, Victoria). The author consulted with me prior to writing it so that it would be authentic. My *Sawdust and Steam: A history of the railways and tramways of the eastern Otways ranges* was used to get the salient details plus discussion on the finer points."

In her author's note, O'Neill states that "Eighty years ago there was a Stringybark Mill in the Otway Forest, Victoria, Australia, but all the characters and events in this story are imaginary".



Left: *Cover of the 1985 edition, published by Hamish Hamilton London; illustration by Valerie Littlewood.*

Right: *Title page inscribed by the author – "For Norm Houghton with very many thanks for all I learnt from your excellent book Sawdust and Steam and all good wishes Judith O'Neill (c/o New College Edinburgh EH1 2LX) October 1985". Image provided by Norman Houghton and used with permission.*

Set in 1908, the central character is Sophie, a young girl who is sent to spend summer with her aunt, uncle, cousins and grandfather where she "soon became absorbed in the bush daily life of the little township at the sawmill in the bush".

At least two other editions have been published, a Magnet edition by Methuen Children's Books in 1987 (reprinted in 1988), and a Mammoth edition by Egmont Children's Books in 1990, as well as a rumoured Penguin or Puffin edition in 1985 although an image of the cover is elusive.[1]

Left: *The 1987 Magnet edition, illustration by Tony Kerins.*

Right: *The 1990 Mammoth edition, illustration by Kaye Hodges.*

Note: *In 1988, Methuen Children's Books (publisher of Magnet) was acquired by Egmont (publisher of Mammoth).*

Judith O'Neill was born in Melbourne in June 1930 and died in March 2006. She studied at the University of Melbourne, and the Institute of Education in London. She moved between England and Australia until she married in 1954. When her husband was appointed Professor of New Testament at Cambridge University in 1964, the family moved permanently to England, where Judith taught, and produced a range of critical anthologies on English poets. She started writing fiction when she retired and moved to Edinburgh. Her books were all set in her native Australia; some of them reflecting her eagerness to explore the world as her ancestors experienced it.[2,3]

Another find was a novel by New Zealand author Walter Smyth, *Wooden Rails: A Romance of the Timberlands*, published by Mills & Boon in London in 1930.

A report in the *Evening Star* (Dunedin) said that it was "the fourth book from the pen of the New Zealand novelist, and, judging from overseas reports, it seems sure of an excellent reception. 'Wooden Rails' is a romantic-mystery story set in the timber milling country of the West Coast".[4] A review in the *Southland Times* described Smyth as an "improving writer" and that *Wooden Rails* was "easily the best story of the New Zealand scene he has written ... (it) is a story set in the timberlands of the West Coast, and its principal character is June Devine, the daughter of the "boss" of

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[1] Internet references to the Penguin/Puffin edition may be the result of ownership changes in the British publishing industry rather than to an actual publication. The original publisher of *Stringybark Mill*, Hamish Hamilton, was owned by the Thomson Organisation from 1965 to 1986 when it was sold to Penguin. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamish_Hamilton. Puffin is Penguin's children's book imprint.

[2] Jane Badger Books. https://janebadgerbooks.co.uk/australasian-authors/oneill-judith.

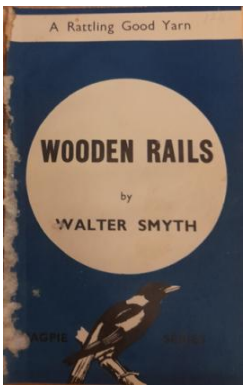
[3] *The Telegraph* (UK), 11 May 2006. Obituary – Judith O'Neill, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1518021/Judith-ONeill.html.

[4] *Evening Star* (Dunedin), 15 Nov 1930, p27. https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/ESD19301115.2.152 (see the tenth paragraph under "Notes").

the Mawhere sawmill, whose mother wishes her to marry Joe Prosser, her father's right-hand man at the mill. June meets Mark Stanton, a young bushman, and to her parents' disgust she falls in love with him."[5]

The book must have been reasonably popular as the serialisation in *The Otago Witness* of his 1931 novel, *Gold in the West*, described him as the author of *Wooden Rails* and three other books.[6]

Wooden Rails was reprinted in Australia by Frank Johnson in 1941, although there is no reference to it having previously been published by Mills & Boon. It was published in the "Magpie Series", described on the back cover as "selected novels by Australian authors". The list of 24 titles includes three by Walter Smyth, with *Wooden Rails* at no. 18. For a story in a series supposedly "depicting various forms of Australian life", readers may have been confused by references to the Mawhere sawmill, the beech forest, rimu logs and New Zealand bird the white throated tui.[7]



Left: *The 1930 Mills & Boon edition. University of Reading (UK), Special Collections* https://vrr.reading.ac.uk/records/a-115400.

Right: *The 1941 Frank Johnson edition – no. 18 in the "Magpie Series". Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia.*

Smyth continued to write novels, branching into westerns at some stage, although they don't seem to have been published by Mills & Boon.[8] In addition to the ones mentioned by *The Otago Witness*, there are other titles held by the National Library of New Zealand and listed by the AusReprints website[9,10] as well as others that can be found for sale online.

A final find, although of less relevance to Australia and New Zealand, is another Mills & Boon novel, *Lumberjack Jill*, by British writer Annabel Lee and published in 1932, one of about 30 romances she authored. The book seems to have faded into obscurity as there are very few references to it on the internet, and no plot summary could be found. [11,12]

"Annabel Lee" was the pseudonym of Elinor Mary O'Donoghue (later E.M. Oddie) who wrote a number of novels and autobiographies. She may have taken her pen name from the title of an 1849 poem by Edgar Allan Poe. The UK's National Portrait Gallery has a photo of her in its collection, taken by renowned photographer Alexander Bassano.[13,14]

University of Reading (UK), Special Collections
https://vrr.reading.ac.uk/records/a-116489

[5] *Southland Times* (New Zealand), 22 Nov 1930, p13. https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/ST19301122.2.92.1 (see the section titled "New Zealand's Scene" under "A Literary Log"). ***(Note:*** *The review reveals an important plot twist, so be warned.)*

[6] *The Otago Witness*, 6 Oct 1931, p6. https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/OW19311006.2.17. The three other books mentioned were *Bonzer Jones*, *The Girl from Mason Creek* and *Jean of the Tussock Country*.

[7] Perhaps Frank Johnson was thinking of the Australian Constitution which provides for the inclusion of New Zealand in the Commonwealth of Australia. www.legislation.gov.au/C2004Q00685 (section 6 "Definitions").

[8] Mills & Boon was founded in 1908 as a general publisher and while it increasingly focussed on romance novels from the 1930s, it continued to publish westerns at least into the mid-1960s, with a stable (so to speak) of at least two dozen authors. These were genuine westerns as opposed to the western-themed romances it published in more recent years. It published mystery/crime novels, as well as educational and other non-fiction works including, in 1962, *Woman: Fancy or Free? Some Thoughts on Woman's Status in Britain Today* by Nan Berger and Joan Maizels, described by *The Guardian* in 2015 as "the pioneering feminist treatise" – see the University of Reading Special Collections for an image of the cover (https://vrr.reading.ac.uk/records/a-118608) and an obituary of Joan Maizels published *The Guardian* in 2015 (www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/may/28/joan-maizels). Nan Berger's papers are held by the London School of Economics and Political Science (https://archives.lse.ac.uk/records/7NBE).

[9] National Library (NZ) https://natlib.govt.nz.

[10] AusReprints – Walter Smyth. https://ausreprints.net.au/creator/66/1/25.

[11] Scott Thompson, 2016. Updates to the Update, *Furrowed Middlebrow*. https://furrowedmiddlebrow.blogspot.com/2016/05/updates-to-update.html.

[12] Scott Thompson, 2013. British & Irish Women Writers of Fiction 1910-1960 (N - O), *Furrowed Middlebrow*. https://furrowedmiddlebrow.blogspot.com/2013/01/british-women-writers-of-fiction-1910_16.html.

[13] National Portrait Gallery (UK). E.M. Oddie (née Elinor Mary O'Donoghue) (1898-1961), Novelist. www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp51607/em-oddie-nee-elinor-mary-odonoghue.

[14] Wikipdia describers Alexander Bassano as "a leading royal and high society portrait photographer in Victorian London ... known for his photo of the Earl Kitchener in the Lord Kitchener Wants You army recruitment poster during the First World War and his photographs of Queen Victoria." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Bassano.

And finally, onto the additional information, clarification and corrections to the article in the December 2024 newsletter, and a ramble into an area not at all concerned with forest history but which I found interesting.

At least 59 of Joyce Dingwell's 82 romance novels[15] have been translated, some into more than one language, and one into at least five. In my earlier article, I wrote that there were editions in four languages – Finnish, French, German and Italian. I have since learnt that her books have also been translated into Dutch, Hebrew, Norwegian, Portuguese (published in Brazil), Romanian, Russian, Spanish (published in Panama) and Welsh.[16],[17] In 1964, one of her novels was serialised in Swiss newspaper *L'Impartial*.[18]

The translations include German and Dutch versions of her 1959 book *The House in the Timberwoods* as *Fremde Welt* ("Strange World") and *Het Woud der Verwachting* ("The Forest of Expectation") respectively. The German translation by Cornelia Halke was published by W. Möhring in 1962, and the Dutch translation by Ton Stan was published by Harlequin Netherlands in 1992 (I haven't found an image of the cover).

There are two Romanian versions of her 1964 book *The Timber Man* (possibly the same translation), translated literally as *Tăietorul de Lemne*. One is included as part of "a package of 100 books in electronic format" while a separate site offers a download of the text translated by Mihnea Columbeanu who has also translated works by such writers as Stephen King and Daphne du Maurier. Neither site provides a cover of the book.[19]

Left: *"Fremde Welt" (German language edition of "The House in the Timberwoods"), W. Möhring 1962.*

Right: *"The Timber Man", Mills & Boon, 1964. University of Reading, Special Collections. https://vrr.reading.ac.uk/records/a-118453)*

In the earlier article, I said that Joyce Dingwell was the first Australian writer to be published by Mills & Boon. This is supported by Joseph McAleer who described her as "Mills & Boon's first native Australian author"[20], but some sources say that she was their first Australian-based writer. A subtle distinction. If it's not Dingwell who was the first Australian-born author, I don't know who is but is presumably one who was living in the UK. Dingwell herself was born in Sydney in 1909, a third-generation Australian with a Welsh mother according to McAleer. She died in 1997 on the NSW Central Coast.

Dingwell's book *The House in the Timberwoods* was turned into a 1983 film, *The Winds of Jarrah*, and I quoted one source which claimed that it was the first Mills & Boon book to be made into a movie. I've since learnt of at least one earlier example, the 1974 Mills & Boon novel *Leopard in the Snow* by Anne Mather which was made into a film of the same name in 1978.

Left: *University of Reading, Special Collections. Leopard in the Snow by Ann Mather. https://vrr.reading.ac.uk/records/a-119524*

Right: *Internet Movie Database. Leopard in the Snow. www.imdb.com/title/tt0077847. The presenter of the film was Canadian company Harlequin which, from 1958, republished many Mills & Boon titles for the North American market and which became the owner of Mills & Boon in 1971.*

[15] Mills & Boon published all 82 of Joyce Dingwell's romance novels, including nine under the pen name Kate Starr, although Joseph McAleer refers to "83" in his 1999 book. *Passion's Fortune: The Story of Mills & Boon*, Oxford University Press, p103. In 1931, her children's book, *Hum of the Forest: An Australian Fairy Story*, was published in Melbourne by Edward A. Vidler under her real name, Joyce Owen Starr.

[16] In her November 1995 address to the Annual Conference of the Bibliographical Society of Australian & New Zealand, Juliet Flesch, Collection Management Librarian, University of Melbourne, refers to the "25 other languages into which many English-language romances are translated" (see "A Labour of Love? The Story Behind the Compilation of *Love Brought to Book: A Bio-bibliography of 20th Century Australian Romance Novels*" (p184) tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00048623.1996.10754974. Mills & Boon Australia says that Mills & Boon novels are translated into "over 30 different languages" www.millsandboon.com.au/pages/about-us.

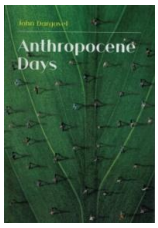
[17] The WorldCat website published by OGLC and the *Index Translationum* database published by UNESCO list respectively 53 and 40 translations of works by Joyce Dingwell and Kate Starr. While there is some overlap between the lists, neither is complete. Online searches, including in bookseller websites, have uncovered more editions, bring the total number to 127 across 12 languages: Dutch x29; French x26; Hebrew x24; German x18; Italian x9; Russian x9; Romanian x4; Portuguese x3; Finnish x2; Norwegian x1; Spanish x1; and Welsh x1. https://search.worldcat.org and www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsform.aspx.

[18] *L'Impartial* published *Une rose et trois baisers* in 57 parts, from 13 June to 19 August 1964 – all instalments are available through the e-newspaper archive of the Library Network of Western Switzerland (RERO) – chapter 1 is at https://doc.rero.ch/record/103159/files/1964-06-13.pdf (p19). The French title translates as "A rose and three kisses", published in English in 1955 as *Greenfingers Farm* (her second book). The book was published in France in 1961 by Éditions des Remparts although I don't know if the serialisation in *L'Impartial* is taken from this version, or is a separate translation.

[19] The now expired e-book offer is at www.grouprice.ro/grouprice/oferta/iti-place-sa-citesti100-carti-electronice-incredibila-reducere-97.php – "91. THE TIMBER MAN, autor: Joyce Dingwell - Titlu românesc: TAIETORUL DE LEMNE" – while the translation by Mihnea Columbeanu is available for download from www.scribd.com/document/404273316/Taietorul-de-Lemne.

[20] Joseph McAleer 1999. *Passion's Fortune: The Story of Mills & Boon*, Oxford University Press, p102.

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



John Dargavel, 2023. *Anthropocene Days*. The White Horse Press. ISBN 9781912186686. 228pp.

Review by Judit Farkas.
Translation by Rachel Maltese.

Reprinted from "Global Environment" Vol. 18 No. 1
www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/10.3828/whpge.63837646622517 . This article was published open access under a CC BY licence: https://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0.

'We feel its history.'

John Dargavel, author of *Anthropocene Days*, was born in 1932 in London, England and died in Melbourne, Australia in 2024. A forester and forest historian by profession, he earned degrees at the Universities of Edinburgh (BSc, forestry, 1956) and Melbourne (MSc, forestry, 1970) before receiving his Ph.D. from the Australian National University in 1983. In 1988 he helped found the Australian Forest History Society, an institution in which he would hold life-long membership. He is considered a pioneer both of forest history and of the social sciences in forestry.

Anthropocene Days, a collection of 27 essays, offers a summary of its author's life, thoughts and worldview – an account of everything he knew and experienced in relation to the environment, climate change, society, and history. Though appearing together, the essays can also be read individually, as topics unto themselves. The volume bears particular weight as Dargavel's parting work, the testimonial of a man who, over the course of his long life, stood witness to the processes whose consequences the world sees today. That said, it neither scolds, nor makes bold pronouncements, but – rather – casts out its gaze, forming opinions and telling stories. Backed by its author's considerable scientific knowledge, *Anthropocene Days* seeks to promote a better understanding of both the impact of climate change, and potential solutions, while also responding to contemporary anti-science scepticism and illuminating the value scientific knowledge continues to hold. It further lays out a number of useful examples for the benefit of researchers wishing to help alleviate the environmental crisis without signing up to activist movements.

Though some of the essays do appear to spring directly from the author's own life experiences, the book is not an autobiography, but – as per its back cover blurb – a memoir and a history simultaneously. Its occasionally odd chapter titles, chains of association, and seemingly distantly derived subject matter all serve similar purpose: contextualisation – of a library research project, a scent, a garden in Singapore; of solar panels and dust; and of a variety of other things – by a highly educated scholar and a sensitive observer. The method, as Jessica Urwin notes in an interview published in this journal last year, [1] is an evocative one; its way of seeing one that can identify deep-seated connections between the micro and macro levels of our world – in all probability the result of a lifetime's accrued wisdom paired with an approach typical of professionals in Dargavel's field.

Perhaps the most important message to come out of *Anthropocene Days* relates to the broad dependence of climate change both on mundane things, and on humanity's failure to recognise life's interconnectedness across time and space. It is a line of thought that, to my mind, recalls the mentality of philosopher Roger Gottlieb when he asks: 'What morality has had to face the banality of evil, in which the most common everyday actions (driving an automobile, putting fertilizer on the lawn) could contribute to the devastating effects on future generations or people at the other ends of the world?'[2] Both emphasise an interplay between the effects of everyday actions and our obliviousness to interrelatedness as an obstruction to accountability.

Important to this complex approach is the manner in which the author paints history – or, more precisely, histories: the pasts of forests and landscapes; the times 'before history'; aboriginal peoples and early settlers; the here and now; the way these become covered over time and again as new histories arise. It is these layers, Dargavel stresses, that must be plumbed if modern environmental problems are to be comprehended and managed. It is a soaring train of thought, one that takes its point of departure from ordinary, insignificant events: a daily walk in the park, a reprieve under an apple tree, the call of a thrush. His are the pathways of clear-sightedness: 'As we walk through any forest, we feel its history … We also have the future in our mind's eye', as Dargavel once opined of forests and foresters.[3] That he should have been influenced by French historian Fernard Braudel (1902-1985) is no wonder: just as Braudel links History to everyday lifeworlds, so Dargavel interprets conspicuous environmental problems and dominant ecological narratives in concert with local environmental histories and the banalities of day-to-day life.[4]

To cite a concrete example, in Chapter 21, the author takes us through two Singapore gardens – Singapore Botanic Gardens and Gardens-by-the-Bay – parsing from them the contradictory story of the city itself, as it grew from a tiny tropical island settlement into an enormous city-state. Walking about with the investigative skills of a historian and naturalist, Dargavel extracts from minute signs the vestiges of British and Japanese colonisation and colonial botanical research, while at the same time evoking the breath-taking scope of the opportunity and impact of modern nature-transforming technologies. Histories – arboreal history, botanical history, and colonial history; the histories of globalisation, technology, democracy, and other such grandiosities as

[1] Jessica Urwin, "*Reflecting on our Anthropocene Days*: An interview with John Dargavel". *Global Environment* 16(3) (2023): 594-609.

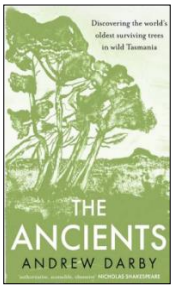
[2] Roger S. Gottlieb, "Introduction. The center cannot hold". In Gottlieb (ed.), *The Ecological Community. Environmental Challenges for Philosophy, Politics, and Morality* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1997). pp.ix–xi (here x).

[3] Jessica Urwin, *Reflecting*', 598.

[4] John Dargavel, *Anthropocene Days*, pp.121-125.

can be understood in the course of a brief stroll and concise text – all viewed through the lens of the author's own life: the dates and historical information are presented in the context of his and his grandfather's own lifetimes, magnifying them in a way that helps us, too, to view the world around us from a new perspective.

Thanks to Libby Robin for providing this review.



Andrew Darby 2025. *The Ancients: Discovering the world's oldest surviving trees in wild Tasmania.* Allen & Unwin. ISBN 9781761069239. www.allenandunwin.com/browse/book/Andrew-Darby-Ancients-9781761069239

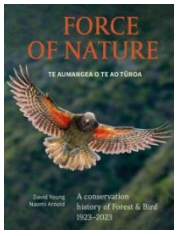
From the publisher's notes.

In *The Ancients* Andrew Darby goes on a journey to find the world's oldest surviving trees in wild Tasmania. He tells of their exploitation and loss to fire even as their true value was revealed, and of the people offering hope for their future.

In wild Tasmania there are trees whose direct ancestors lived with dinosaurs. Many of those alive today are thousands of years old, and some have been growing for ten millennia or more. They are mostly hard to reach, hidden in forest valleys or on remote mountains, survivors of human greed and fire.

Prize-winning nature writer Andrew Darby takes us on an island odyssey to discover the world's oldest surviving trees. First, he seeks the little-known King's Lomatia, perhaps the oldest single tree of all. Then the primeval King Billy, Pencil and Huon pines – with their vivid stories of admiration and destruction – and the majestic giant eucalypts. Finally, he looks at the 'mother tree', the Myrtle Beech, and Australia's only native winter deciduous tree, the golden Fagus.

On his journey he shares the stories of the people who identified the ancients – scientists and nature-lovers who teased out their secrets and came to venerate them. Lacking defences to fire, these awe-inspiring trees face growing threats as the climate changes. But their protection is becoming more sophisticated, offering hope for their future – and ours.



David Young and Naomi Arnold, 2024. *Force of Nature Te Aumangea o te ao Tūroa A Conservation History of Forest & Bird 1923-2024.* Potton & Burton, Nelson, NZ. ISBN 9781988550701. www.pottonandburton.co.nz/product/force-of-nature-te-aumangea-o-te-ao-turoa

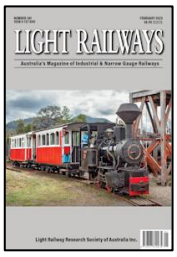
From the publisher's notes.

Force of Nature Te Aumangea o te ao Tūroa, is the inspiring history of Forest & Bird, New Zealand's oldest independent conservation organisation for over 100 years. Beginning in 1923, Forest & Bird have been involved in all of the significant environmental campaigns of the last century, starting with efforts to protect native birds and their forest habitat, creation of many of the national parks and in recent decades efforts to protect our marine environment and attempts to tackle climate change. Written by David Young and Noami Arnold this book is highly readable and heavily illustrated, with a focus on the remarkable people involved in conservation work in New Zealand.

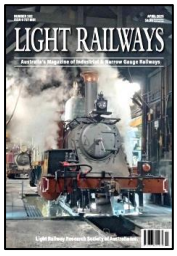
Thanks to Michael Roche for providing this information. He also included links to interviews with one of the co-authors, David Young: www.thepost.co.nz/culture/360499575/force-nature-celebrating-100-years-forest-bird and www.nzbooklovers.co.nz/post/interview-david-young-talks-about-force-of-nature.

Light Railways: Australia's Magazine of Industrial & Narrow Gauge Railways, February 2025 (LR301) and April 2025 (LR302). 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://shop.lrrsa.org.au –nos. 1 to 290 are available as free downloads, while nos. 291 to 302 are $8.95 each (plus postage) for printed copies or $5.50 each for PDF downloads.



LR301 has a piece on the visit of an English railway enthusiast to Victoria in 1957 (p12), which included a trip over the narrow-gauge government railway to Beech Forest, a line which relied heavily on forest produce for its income. An addendum on the rear cover has three excellent photographs showing the Garrett locomotive G42 hauling pulpwood trains on the line. An article on Leslie Cecil Leslie (a locomotive designer – p16) mentions his design for the second of a series of steam locomotives for use during the construction of the Hume dam. This particular locomotive was constructed by Alfred Harman & Sons in Port Melbourne, perhaps more famous at the time for their highly-successful double-drum logging winches. The Letters section carries a patent drawing of the New Zealand designed "Trail" rail tractor (p38), at least three of which were used on timber tramways in the Otways. Finally, the Heritage & Tourist Section has an item on the use of Kelly & Lewis diesel locomotive 5957 (formerly used to haul sawn timber from the Rubicon Forest to Alexandra – p44) in use for a "driver experience" operation during the Alexandra Timber Tramway's recent heritage machinery festival.



LR302 has an article by Peter Evans on W. Day & Sons (p3), a Victorian firm which manufactured a large number of internal-combustion-powered timber tramway locomotives, and two steam-powered timber tramway locomotives. The Letters section has a follow-up item on the Alfred Harman & Sons steam locomotive (described in LR301) used during the construction of the Hume dam.