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Good to get in touch with you this morning.

I am sending you the contents of our draft chapters for the Thematic Forest History and Heritage Assessment for the Upper and Lower Northeast CRA Regions.

I hope that you might have some comments on their content, especially in regard to the last ten years or so. I did my surveys of the Northern National Parks in mainly in the eighties for the NPWS, especially for the rainforests. Recent events however, would help to bring it more up to date.

If you have a chronology of events, court cases etc , it would very helpful indeed, if we could refer to it. Or anything else you might think is relevant.

Many thanks for your help.

Helen Proudfoot

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared for the joint Commonwealth/State Steering Committee which oversees the comprehensive regional assessments of forests in New South Wales.

The comprehensive regional assessments (CRAs) provide the scientific basis on which the State and Commonwealth governments will sign regional forest agreements (RFAs) for the major forests of New South Wales. These agreements will determine the future of the State's forests, providing a balance between conservation and ecologically sustainable use of forest resources.

This report was undertaken to document past human interaction with forested environments to help prioritise, guide, inform and stimulate research design and questions for investigative research and field work.

A glance at the map of the Upper and Lower North East CRA Regions shows that a considerable proportion of land is delineated into four main categories - National Park, Wilderness Area, State Forest and Timber Reserve. Apart from the Hunter Valley lands and the western side of the Tablelands, and the Hastings and Manning River valleys, the extent and consistent covering of the forests is still a remarkable presence on the face of this part of New South Wales.

In order to trace the history of these forests, how they have fared over the last two hundred years, we have followed a series of thematic frameworks. They can be grouped broadly into two categories: The history of the State bodies which had the responsibility for guardianship of these forested areas, the Forestry Commission (now named the State Forests of NSW), and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, a relative new-comer on the scene. We have also described the Landscape where these forests are located, the topography they occupy. The System of Land Tenure, and its influence on the areas has been addressed briefly, and the pivotal role of the towns. A chapter, too, touches on the philosophies that served to shape the forests and link them into the emerging Australian development, and into the world economy. The conservation movement changed the intellectual climate surrounding the forests. These themes and their chapters form the background of the study.

Then there is the environment itself, and the sites within the Forests and Parks that have a meaning conveying a sense of their history. We have looked at the early *seminal* periods of convicts and timber-getting, cedar and the penetration of the North Coast, at the dispossession, contact and continuity among the Aborigines. We have tried to encapsulate the timber industry as it utilised forest resources. We have looked at the presence of mining in the forests, in the late 19th century, but still there from time to time. We have tried to say something about the women and children and their lives which complemented the more 'heroic' figures of the active timber getters. Burials in the forest have not been ignored.

Finally, the sites themselves: on the whole, they are not impressive, or beautiful; they are not highly distinctive or rare. But they still have a tale to tell about an important period in Australia's development, a period not properly considered in the past. The forests themselves and the way they have been treated is now our inheritance.

The first part of the Thematic Forest History, then, has set the stage for the ensuing second part, the field trips, and the third part, where the sites inspected, and the communities visited, should contribute more detail and more human interest. In the end, the patterns are not enough, the people, the names and the memories have to furnish the imagery, and the places themselves point to the themes in the environmental history.

1. STATE FORESTS - THEIR HISTORY IN NSW

1.1 EUROPEAN CULTURE AND AUSTRALIAN FORESTS

THEMES: NSW HO 9 Environment

AHC HT.03 Developing regional economies

HT.03.03.04.04 Managing forest resources

HT.03.03.04.04.01 Protecting forest resources

From the beginning of settlement there had been restrictions on cutting timber, and the hope of securing good timber to be used in the building of ships for the British Navy had been one of factors cited as a reason for settling Botany Bay in 1788. The pines at Norfolk, however, proved to be unsuitable. The trees closer to home, however, once the prejudices of the first timber-getters were overcome, proved to eminently suitable for a range of uses.

From the beginning of settlement, too, there were conditions implied and stated, when land was granted. The owner was bound to 'improve' the land. That meant in most cases, he had to fence it to control his animals, cultivate some portion of it, and usually build a dwelling on the site. This imperative was carried on when both urban and rural land was put up for sale after 1831. In the Northern Region, the settlers, to be elegible to stay on their blocks, had to demonstrate their intention by clearing the land, fencing it, and establishing a dwelling place. The Lands Department chief imperative was to settle people on the land, so its Forestry component was not central to its main purpose, and at times, was directly opposed to it.

For instance, in 1857, Williamson, a pit-sawyer of Dorrigo, in order to take up crown land there, to farm in conjunction with his timber skills, (scrub blocks were of 640 acres, or 259 hectares) was instructed by the Government 'to remove the timber within twelve months'. This meant a scramble to comply, and also meant most of the timber was wasted (Vader 1987:70). Helen Hannah has written with some feeling about the people who were encouraged to slash and burn the Comboyne Forests (Hannah 1981) in the period from 1899 onwards. There are folk tales in every district along the North Coast to parallel these stories. They are stories which are now assuming the force of morality tales.

Another instance of this official policy was the decision handed down by a Supreme Court Judge in 1881, indicating that a settler was required to carry out 'clearing' by ringbarking the trees to give evidence of his intention to stay and work on the land. The trees were said locally to be 'rung', and it was required a certain distance from the creeks (Curby: 1993). This requirement remained in place until the 1960s.

In hindsight, the implication of this past destruction can only be deplored. But this regulation of clearing the land persisted until the 1960s when Crown Land was released for farms. Reasons lie deep within the social fabric of European culture, they have been ingrained in the Protestant work ethic, the idea that the 'wilderness' would be productive when it was converted to conventional farmland, mixed up with the romantic idea that country life was preferable to town life, that the 'arcadian' life was the classical ideal. 'Et in arcadia ego,' was accepted in England as a state to be envied, strived for; it was inscribed on monuments in the highly sophisticated rural parks.

In Australia, the idea that 'yeomen farmers' would develop the vacant land, winning virtue as they worked, was grasped by the legislatures of the late 19th century as a means of settling migrants onto farms, and giving them work and a chance in life. It was also used to counter the political powers of the squatting interests. It was largely a fantasy. In England, the

enclosures had dispossessed the rural poor. Australia was inheriting a tradition which had run its course in Europe (See Seddon 1997, Proudfoot 1984, Bolton 1981, Lansbury 1970).

1.2 THE TRADITION OF FOREST GUARDIANSHIP

When the English Crown declared sovereignty over the Australian east coast, the land was seen as Crown Land, with the Crown retaining custodianship.

Governor Hunter in 1795 was concerned about the wastage of cedar in particular, noticed on the banks of the Hawkesbury River, and made a regulation that the 'King's Mark' put on all timber on crown land, and offenders prosecuted. Governor King, in 1801, tried to control timber-getting on the Hunter River north from Sydney, and declared both coal and timber procured on the Hunter to be the property of the crown, and licenses were issued. Other regulations were issued over the next few years, and fees made payable to the Naval Officer in Sydney, and used for the support of the Orphan schools.

Governor Macquarie reviewed the system in 1811, and duties were payable on imports of cedar from other ports in NSW. By this time Government sawyers camps had been established on the Lane Cove River, and timber was shipped down to Sydney for building purposes. Duty on timber ceased to levied from timber from the Hunter as the timber supply at Lane Cove and Pennant Hills grew scarce, and attention was given to the other species of trees in the Kur-ing-gai forests. Cedar-getting extended down the South Coast in 1826, and Hasting River cedar arrived from the North Coast about the same time, when the convicts' secondary detention centre was established at Port Macquarie. Demand grew for the beautiful, scented wood, and the search for it extended ever further.

Cedar was highly prized in Europe too, and became a export staple commensurate with wool in the early decades of the colony. The export trade in fact drove the search for cedar and gave it great importance. Other woods too, as cedar was getting scarce and hard to find, hoop pine, tallowwood, and hardwoods were used for export.

By 1826 a halfpenny duty was briefly imposed on cedar. In 1835 again, a license was required to cut cedar on Crown lands. This was re-enforced in 1839.

In the meantime, however, the effects of the British Act of Parliament in 1831 to allow lands in the colony to be thrown open for sale, rather than for grant of lease, was fuelling the colonists' demand for land within the limits of Location (the Nineteen Counties). The North Coast was not included within these limits to this time.

Licenses over the years from 1851, 1861, 1864, 1866, 1875 and 1878, were concerned mainly to provide a modicum system of control over timber-getting, and to collect the duties and fees due to the crown. They were not primarily conceived as a means of retaining the forests for the distant future. The regulations were imposed to provide bulwarks against encroachment by farmers, to preserve fine stands of timber for future harvesting when they were ready.

Full Responsible Government was granted to NSW in 1855. An important local land act was passed in 1861, followed by regulations in 1866. Timber Licenses were issued for a fee for occupiers of Crown Lands to cut timber whether held by lease or otherwise. One other restriction was to forbid cedar being cut under two feet in diameter, another was that the bark was not to be removed from standing trees. Whether these regulations were respected is not known.

The Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1861, however, was a signal for the occupation of North Coast lands for free selection. It was a major turning point in the history of the North Coast, and had a major and disastrous impact on the region's forests.

1.3 THE FORESTRY BRANCH

In 1876, Forestry Conservancy was established as part of the Occupation of Lands Branch under the Secretary for Lands. One of its first and most famous Inspector of Forests was the poet Henry Kendall appointed in 1881. The job was too demanding, and killed him within a year. Forestry became a Department after 1890, and was then shuffled between Mines and Agriculture.

A most significant series of reservations on the North Coast, however, was announced before 1876 (Grant 1988:ch3). These were fourteen reserves totalling 190,235 hectares in the Clarence Pastoral District announced in 1871. The Branch had a meagre staff of under ten people spread very thinly, so supervision was almost impossible (Grant 1988:27-28, 61).

The 1876 act was, however, accompanied with the provision for Class A state Forests, and Class B timber reserves. Class A State Forests included lands where large areas could be allotted for continuous removal of matured timber. Large blocks were subdivided into areas up to 5 square miles (259 square kilometres), and smaller ones of 160 acres (65 hectares) granted for three years for a royalty payment. Minimum girths were set for trees that could be felled, and marked with a registered brand. Forestry had the task of supervising these regulations. Class B timber reserves were for localities where timber demand was small and confined to local requirements.

This classification system was continued and expanded in the Crown Lands Act of 1884. State Forests were generally lands containing valuable timber within 20 miles of navigable water or railway. Licenses could be sold by auction or tender, and royalties paid for different timbers removed. Timber Reserves Class A, B, and C were associated with local timber mills. Permits were required, and minimum girths set. Attention was paid to Wattle Bark harvesting for tanning; quarry licenses could be issued; sites for sawmills licensed, and land leased for agistment of stock. A year later, 1885, further details were added: mining prop permits were issued, thinning out of trees could be authorised.

J. Ednie Brown was appointed Director General of Forests in 1890. He was a Scottish forester from Western Australia. He soon realised that no reform was possible without new legislation. There was a marked hostility to forestry in the depression climate in the nineties. (Carron 1985:7)

Revenues from forest products rose to £100,796 in 1906 to £65,020,000 in 1987-88. This revenue was offset against costs for £33,278 in 1906 and £52,581,000 in 1987-88. (Grant 1988: ch2)

1.4 FORESTRY COMMISSION 1909

A Royal Commission of Inquiry of Forests was conducted in 1908. They found that 'Probably no section of business under Government control has experienced greater vicissitudes in management or less consideration than that connected with our forests. No attempt appears to have been made to lay down a policy of management... The protection of the forest domain appears to have been nearly always subordinated to the policy of settlement' (Royal Commission 1908).

An Act to establish a Forestry Department, distinct from the Department of Lands, was passed in 1909, with R. Dalrymple-Hay as Director General, but Forestry was still a minor department under Agriculture, and finances were meagre. Dalrymple-Hay became the Chief Commissioner when the organisation was changed to the Forestry Commission in 1916. This signalled a change of attitude. The Commission under his direction was instrumental in saving much valuable forest resources by reserving them as State Forests or Timber Reserves. He adopted a policy of regeneration of eucalypt stands by seedlings or coppicing.

At that time it was believed that 'most of the eucalypt forests regenerated naturally and the more heavily they are logged and disturbed the better they regenerate' (Grant 1988:76). This philosophy was followed so steadfastly in forestry in NSW, that it is instructive to repeat it here.

> A fully-stocked mature forest usually has a scarcity of regeneration of young trees as there is not room for new trees to grow. It is only when the mature trees are removed by logging, ringbarking, or occasionally destroyed by severe bush fire that areas ranging from as small as one tenth of a hectare to several hundred hectares are made suitable for young trees to grow. Most virgin forests have a large proportion of trees that are over-mature and unsuitable for the timber industry. It is necessary to get rid of these by ringbarking or felling. Then conditions are favourable for eucalypt regeneration, that is, plenty of sunlight.

This form of silviculture treatment has been part of normal Forestry practice since 1911, when it was tried for the hardwood timbers of the North Coast Reserves - at Grafton, Taree, Wyong and Cessnock. Regeneration is mainly from seedlings and coppicing. Regrowth forests of blackbutt were established at Kendall, Whian Whian SF and elsewhere. Flooded gum stands, blue gum, grey gum, grey ironbark white mahogany, brush box, tallowwood, and turpentine, are scattered widely on the North Coast. Cedar however has not regenerated.

Hay retired in 1926, and N.W.Jolly was appointed to head the Commission. He pressed for coniferous afforestation. There was a dearth of native softwoods, and imports were increasing. A planting program was begun, but the depression cut-back stopped the project. However some effort and funds were diverted in the early thirties to cooperating with the Prisons in the formation of Prison Afforestation Camps; as well, unemployment relief work programs were organised on a large scale.

In 1928 the Third British Empire Forestry Conference was held in Australia. Opinion there suggested that an annual planting rate of conifers should be increased to 1000 hectares a year (Carron 1985:12). E.H. Swain succeeded Jolly as head Commissioner. He set about to reform the operations of Forestry, and implementing a system that ensured that the foresters, bush operators, and saw-millers were all fairly paid for their contribution to the growing, harvesting and marketing of forest products. He saw the three parts of the industry not as competitors, but as complementary.

After the war, the Forestry service began to see itself as a conservation agency as well a mere revenue-collecting agency. Silviculture management was consolidated, new techniques, like aerial photography were used and better fire protection and road works were organised. Timber harvesting was stepped up. There was reform in the method of collecting royalties.

Back in 1916, it was stated in the Act that the chief objective of the Commission was that it

> Should conserve and utilise the timber on Crown Lands to the best advantage of the State...and provide adequate supplies of timber from Crown-timber lands for building, commercial, industrial, agricultural, mining, and domestic purposes' (Carron 1985:22).

The nucleus of the state forests was established by the 1916 Act, 2 million hectares of reserved forest within three years.

The war had made it more obvious that, while the native forest was mainly composed of heavy, hard, durable woods, it lacked the softer more easily worked woods, and there was considerable demand for this wood met by imports from overseas. Management intensified, and roads constructed into hitherto inaccessible forests in order to facilitate supply.

A Timber Resources Inquiry was conducted in 1950. A starting point was a survey to identify the extent, location, ownership, structure and condition of the native forest. The capacity of the native resource and the demands for wood in both the immediate and longer future were considered. It became clear that the crown reserve could not meet future demands either in quantity or kind, and it was being depleted faster than it could be replaced. The answer was seen to be a vigorous soft-wood program. The Commission also began exercising much more stringent controls over harvesting by 'tree marking'.

In 1951 the Commission began the compilation of working plans (management plans) for the coastal eucalypt forests based on more sophisticated methods of assessment and aimed at prescribing a yield that could be sustained (Carron 1985:24). An essential feature was 'silvicultural treatment'. Swain had advocated this for the North Coast forests back in the thirties. Another name was 'timber stand improvement'.

Wild fires in the forests had resulted in lack of regeneration and poor distribution of timber size classes. In NSW bad fires had occurred in 1916, 1926, 1939 (the year of the disastrous Victorian fire) and 1951-52. Staff of the Commission in that year attended more than a thousand fires in State Forests, and more than one seventh of the forests suffered. Again, 1957-58 was even worse. After these fires the Commission moved to fuel reduction practices of broad-scale burning (Carron 1985:27).

In 1972, the State Government passed two pieces of legislation on forestry. These re-enforced the primary objectives of Forestry as the growing and harvesting of wood to meet the timber needs of the state's industries. As well as that, the Commission's charter was 'to husband and conserve the supply, to protect it and enhance it.' Its role was dependent on the regulation and control of 'working forests'. The milling industry

on the other hand became more reconciled to 'Crown quotas'.

1.5 NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE ESTABLISHED

An attack on the Forestry Commission, however, was to come from another direction altogether. In 1967 and 1974 Tom Lewis engineered the National Parks and Wildlife Acts through the NSW parliament. Attitudes about nature conservation were changing; a ground swell of public opinion was set to swamp traditional forestry, and turn it into the enemy.

There was a long established conservation movement in NSW, National Parks had been declared from 1874 when the Royal National Park was dedicated south of Sydney. Some decades were to pass, however, before some more National Parks were declared. In the 1930s some parts of the Blue Mountains were listed, Bouddi, Patonga Reserve at Brisbane Water, and Kurnell Peninsular were later to become nuclei of larger reservations. In the forties there were more; Beecroft Peninsular, Heathcote, Tallowa, and Snowy National Park. The fifties were marked by Brisbane Water and the Warrumbungles (Goldstein 1988: 57).

The quickening interest in conservation on all fronts, in the built environment from the early sixties in Sydney, was closely followed by more organisation of nature conservation bodies. It was a city-based movement to start, but it spread to the North Coast quickly, especially when alliances were formed where locals had already been disappointed by the failure to establish a National Park on the Nightcap Range, which had been long admired as an exceptional forested area.

Terania Creek Logging Inquiry was a flash-point. It mobilised both local people and city-based conservationists into a movement which captured headlines during the seventies. The level of debate became increasingly sophisticated, with respected scientists joining in: V. & J. Routley, Len Webb of the CSIRO, Harry Recher of the Australian Museum, Dr Fox of the Herbarium, and Peter Hitchcock of the National Parks & Wildlife Service.

Forestry drew fire when it published its Indigenous Forests Policy in 1976. This disclosed the intention to log to the limits of economic accessibility on the north coast escarpment's hardwood forests. Forestry, after years of trying to conserve forests for public benefit, found that it rapidly lost the moral high ground.

After 1980, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act opened up the possibility of challenging rainforest logging in the Land and Environment Court. Furthermore, there was growing international concern at the destruction of rainforests world-wide. At the Jakarta Forestry Congress of 1978, Len Webb argued powerfully for the conservation of rainforest ecosystems, raising government and popular awareness. A new word had entered the popular consciousness - 'ecology'.

In 1987, a proposal was made by the State government to nominate the remaining NSW rainforests for World Heritage Listing. The rainforests of the North Coast, now transferred from Forestry to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, were more closely examined, and the Nomination was put to ICOMOS in Brussels (Adam 1987 and Proudfoot 1984). In order to fulfil the categories stipulated by ICOMOS, the cultural as well as the natural history of the forests contributed to an extensive enquiry. Aspects of the historical, aesthetic, archaeological, and Aboriginal patterns were included, as well as the natural, botanical, zoological, geological and geomorphological issues.

The forests nominated were the Tweed Volcano Group, the Washpool/Gibraltar Range Group, the New England Group, the Hastings Group and the Barrington Group. Logging had been phased out of these rainforests, and they continue to be managed as National Parks. With these nominations, the National Parks Service stole a march over its earlier rival, State Forestry, and became firmly embedded in the public mind as the premier conservation body.

1.6 REVISED ROLE OF STATE FORESTS

The role of State Forestry is now in the stages of being re-assessed. Its primary purpose of supplying timber for use in New South Wales is still uppermost. But its brief has broadened to include other values such as recreational use, educational use, with more accessibility for the public, and more open and accountable policies. There is also some extension of conservation of forest trees used in urban plantings by

Shires and Councils, to treat them more carefully and sympathetically.

The preparation of EIS reports for some of the forests by an archaeologist (Sue Pearson) and a historian (Pauline Curby) is a good start. The formation of an interested group attracted by three recent Australian Forest History Conferences is another.

1.7 OLD GROWTH FORESTS

It is interesting to see now, in the proceedings of the National Conference on Forest History III (Dargavel 1997) a strong concern for 'old-growth' forests in Australia. 'Venerable' forests, they are called by one contributor (N Ednacott), another calls them 'primeval' (N Bonyhady). The feeling seems to be that these forests can testify to the great age of the tree species, and can contribute to the knowledge of a range of botanical, social, geographical and scientific histories.

In an article entitled 'Name and Order in Victoria's Forests' (Dargavel and McRae) the authors have raised some interesting questions. 'An ordered progression of age classes in the forest is the ideal on which the classical theories of forest management rests. The yield of a forest is regulated to a level which can be sustained in the long term by allowing a proper number of trees of each age remain. This proposition is imposed over the more pragmatic way of clear felling, and has been welcomed by the ecologists as an indicator of forest health.

The idea originated among the Swiss and German foresters in the 1870s and quickly became 'the classic' tradition. Working plans were made for each forest, and this scheme was adopted by the British foresters in India. Then the system of classification was introduced into Victoria in the 1920s by Owen Jones the first Chairman of the Forestry Commission there. This ideal, in a transmuted form, had to exist alongside dealing with the exploration of areas for reservation and battling against agricultural interests, which were the most urgent tasks.

In NSW also, it was recognised that the legacy of 19th century lack of management, should be addressed, and there was a perceived need to survey and estimate the timber resources of the State. EHF Swain devised a practical forest assessment method by a strip assessment survey as an Australian adaptation of methods adopted by European and American services and lumber firms. It became standard practice in NSW in the 1920s. The first aerial photography survey was used in 1938 in Eastern Dorrigo for the Brooklana Hoop Pine Plantation. Aerial photographs of the eastern part of the state were made, classifying timber stands. Most of the State Forests have now been mapped and timber estimates formed.

Historical sites and features may stand out clearly in some of these surveys, sites like old saw-mill camps, old forest roads, and old mining fields within the forests. Also tree age might be able to be surveyed with more precision and less time spent.

The present management policy is for multiple use and sustained yield for the native forests aimed at ensuring the continued provision of wood, recreation, and maintenance of environmental values 'in perpetuity' (Grant 1988). Recreation as a professed aim is a comparatively new category.

The question of the age of the forests themselves is now being discussed widely. The age of the forest, the age of the trees within it, and its age since logging, are three different things. Our forests in Australia are being compared with venerable forests in Europe where centuries of woodcutting have produced many stable forest ecosystems, which are of the greatest value both as cultural artefacts and as habitats for plants and animals (Rackham 1997:20-21).

It is a possibility that some trees themselves might come to be given an importance as historic items as living national treasures in the near future in Australia. The Wollemi pines are an example. They are recognised as being of immense historic and prehistoric importance, the oldest trees on the planet. It is important also, however, to recognise other old trees of great age, and prevent them being tidied away in logging operations or 'stand improvement'. Another danger, of course, is urban development. But the greatest danger here is from fire, and not enough is known yet about how this affects the tree's longevity and internal habitats. 'Whether some eucalypts, like some oaks, can live for three or four times the average life-span of the species seems not to be known' (Rackham 1997:22).

The role of the natural grass systems in the native forests, too, has yet to be studied in sufficient detail in Australia. The inland forests of the tablelands are sometimes combinations of tree and grass cover. The

trees may remain, but the ecosystem has suffered with the importation of exotic grass and weeds, not to mention other rampant pests like blackberries, lantana, privet, and broom. Their introduction is a historical accident which has been disregarded as 'history' or 'culture'.

There is still a crucial role to be played by the State Forests organisation of NSW. In order to grow the trees to be harvested for the innumerable uses in daily life, the forests have to be managed in the most ecologically sensible way from various points of view, including the criteria demanded by historical, aesthetic, scientific, educational, and practical significance. The forests and their foresters are being asked to take on a newly urgent set of tasks in a world where forest depletion has reached alarming proportions. Man is connected to his earthly habitat by the trees and vegetation around him; they are an essential part of biological life. Without trees we should be worst than diminished: we would be part of a planet in terminal decline.

2. FOREST PHILOSOPHY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

THEMES: NSW HO 9 Environment

AHC HT.01 Tracing the evolution of a continent's special environments

> 'In the woods, too, a man casts off his years as a snake its slough, and what period soever of life, is always a child.'

The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote these words in his 'Essay on Nature' in 1836. They were to influence generations of Americans seeking an experience of sublimity drawn from nature and its marvellous works. His words were quoted in Northern NSW when a rainforest reserve of 12000 acres on the Nightcap Range was dedicated as a National Forest in 1935. The local people, however, thought that the dedication was only hollow words when parts of the area were later given over to banana plantation. (Proudfoot 1984:55)

The great botanist Frederick von Mueller, in Australia, was also moved by the great forests of Victoria: 'What is vitality,' he wrote, and what mortal can measure the share of delight enjoyed by any organism?'

An underlying concern has been apparent in botanical circles in Australia since the middle of the 19th century, and has always been central to the conservation movement here. In NSW, the Reverend William Woolls was an early spokesman and encourager of the study of forests. It became a both a scientific stimulus to botanical endeavour and theory, and a genteel fashion, with ladies joining in the collecting of specimens and painting their native flowers. Australia quickly became an important field for botanical science.

The fledging scientific Societies under the patronage of von Mueller in Melbourne and the Rev W.B. Clarke in Sydney, noted the changes that had taken place around the cities in the plant material since white settlement. There were worries that the destruction of the forests further afield would result in drastic climatic changes. There was considerable debate in scientific circles in the 1870s and 1880s.

The forests then, inspired a sense of wonder in the articulate beholder. Agnes Fagan, writing in her diary in 1885, said of Hogan's Brush near Gosford at the head of Narrara Creek, 'Immense trees seemed to form a canopy over us, to look up one was amazed at the heights ...' and was glad that the Government had formed a Nursery reserve there, for she presumed that it would be all destroyed (Tabuteau 1991:24). There was a sense of inevitability about the ringbarked trees, the tall saplings dying, the trees felled and stacked.

2.2 EXPLORERS AND ARTISTS

Australian explorers, John Oxley, Clement Hodgkinson and Allan Cunningham, recorded their astonishment at 'the dense walls of shining brush, the monumental trees, flowering creepers, the vast variety of plant material.' They recorded their sense of wonderment and awe. Von Mueller put it forcefully: 'No city, however great its splendour, brilliant its arts, or enchanting its pleasures - can arouse those sentiments of veneration which, among all the grand works of nature, an undisturbed forest-region is most apt to call forth.'1(1876)

The artists tried to grapple with the aesthetics of the forest scenery. Another German, schooled in Italy and Dusseldorf, Eugen von Guerard, the head of the Victorian School of Art, is justly famous for his

pictures of the forests near Melbourne, and of the Illawarra near Sydney. Conrad Martens, too, painted forest scenery, delighting in the vegetation which contrasted so strongly with the usual eucalyptus ecology. W.C. Piguenit painted many forest scenes, a notable one being of 'A Northern River, NSW' c.1900, which recaptures some of the vanished forest denseness of the brushes along the rivers there.

Photographers too, produced many views: N.J. Caire, Charles Kerry and J.W. Lindt, among them. Lindt worked for a while from his studio based at Grafton. He specialised in images depicting Aborigines in their traditional state.

One of the most telling images of the Richmond River, however, is found in a surveyor's map of the site of the town of Lismore, 1855. Drawn by Fredt S. Peppercorne, it shows the river winding between its banks which are set in a forest of trees, itself winding with the river, thickening up around the junction of the Richmond with its tributary, Leycester's Creek. This shows the extent of the virgin rainforest then, and also shows its vulnerability. How quickly it was cut out! The town, surveyed and settled, had 'thinly timbered flats' surrounding it adjacent to the thin strips of river forest.

* * * *

There is some difficulty in organising an historical account of the development of the Upper and Lower North East Regions, based in a thematic framework. The dominant themes are very similar in each district, the sequential progression of each land use is also similar. There is no major, dominant centre; the towns which became the district centres for their districts are based on the rivers, and compete with each other, and with the smaller towns which were more firmly established when harbour and river public works were carried out at the beginning of the 20th century.

The State Forest Organisation, which gradually took such a big role in these districts with its control of a large portion of the land, forested, or cut-out and re-afforested, has not been easy to survey. Its role is pervasive, but it is not easy to make generalisations.

However, for a comparison with a forest region which may be able to cast some light on the forestry practices on the North Coast, it is possible to go to the great Victorian forests. Their progress along the path of reform has been accelerated by a disaster of such proportions that they were forced to change direction and stop taking the forests for granted.

2.3 BLACK FRIDAY 1939 VICTORIA AND BLACK SUNDAY 1939 NSW

In 1939, a drought year, a wild-fire of such proportions swept over central Victoria burning 1.4 million ha of forest land; 2428 houses were destroyed, 1500 people made homeless, 71 lives were lost, whole communities wiped out. It covered an area of about one fifth of the state (Griffiths 1992:3-13). The scope of the disaster is hard to comprehend. No fire in NSW can compare with it, though fires here too, are part of the summer scene. In NSW, on Black Sunday of the same fateful year, 1939, terrifying fires swept through the Buladelah and Wang Wauk forests of the lower north coast (Murray 1997:62).

The Victorian disaster was a fire that changed the psyche of Australian people, entered their folklore, and sent shock-waves north to NSW. What is more, it is still within living memory. The fire marked a turning point in Australian forestry. The post-war preoccupation with planting and encouraging new forests to grow, was all pervading. The Australian forest legacy could no longer be taken for granted. This preoccupation also became important in NSW.

The Mountain Ash Forest is growing back now, after experimental beginnings by Forester David Ashton who followed a vital clue for its regeneration (Griffiths1992:61). His work, unfortunately, has no parallel in NSW for the growing of Cedar. Ashton was a fine botanist, but he was also a careful historian, like every good ecologist. He tapped the historical record as well as the botanical characteristics.

The study of the Victorian forest has also pointed to some relics which might be found in NSW forests on the North Coast, the escarpment, and the Tablelands. 'In a land of fire, custodians of culture came to rely heavily on memories, relics, and an ability to read the forest itself' (Griffiths1992:85). Where there are few memorials to help call up the past, folk memories are precious. The entwining of culture with nature, helps to explain the natural processes in the forest, especially where the former custodians have drifted away. The forest itself reclaims the relics, so traces of human occupance assume an urgency before they are

lost, and the story of their purpose and endeavour fades.

2.4 HISTORIC SITES IN FORESTS

Historic sites in the forest are rarely grand or beautiful. They may be rubbish dumps, or a heap of sawdust to mark the site of a timber mill, a signpost to the area's industrial past. Aerial photography can provide a clue of their past locations. Tree stumps can take on the aura of historic monuments. The Giant Fig in Victoria Park Nature Reserve was seen by Cook and Banks as they sailed up the coast in 1770, and noted in their log books. This monument is still living. Tree stumps can be most evocative; even now there must be some stumps and ringbarked trees solemnly marking places in the Big Scrub area.

Sometimes ancient and venerable trees remain, some isolated specimens, but not especially remarked upon. They should be. They should be marked and checked from time to time, in the forest, or elsewhere, even if felled or buried, or where the forest has been cleared. A grove of ancient trees where they still exist should be treasured.

Remains of timber tramways often have big timber in their construction, and earthworks. Six inch nails, dogspikes in Victoria, are found almost everywhere, bogie-wheels may be found along tramways, some bridges, collapsed or unsteady are found in National Parks and State Forests, especially near old mining areas. A wide range of artefacts may still be found near mills or mines: stamp batteries, flywheels, wheel hubs, sawblades, cyclones, fire dugouts, cement kilns, firebricks, corrugated iron leantos, chimneys, Sometimes whole huts have survived, with remnant exotic gardens still with hardy specimens growing. Bottles and tins are found in old rubbish dumps.

One of the greatest disturbances in many northern region forests has been mining - for gold, tin, antimony, semiprecious stones. Low key mining has penetrated a large number of reserved forests. At others, like Dalmorton State Forest, its presence is found in relics around the mining fields. The forest might claim back the sites, or the mines might be re-worked again. Historic records are essential to the prospector to enable him to see where the past strikes have been. The researcher can likewise use the old mine records for information.

* * * *

'It has been remarked that History has been slow to find its way into land management considerations. History can have a fundamental role where 'nature' and 'culture' are intertwined. Trees live longer than their managers, and natural or imposed forest cycles are greater than a lifetime' (Griffiths 1992:92) . In the past secrecy has been the refuge of the foresters in their defence against outsiders like environmentalists on the one hand, and those who would over-utilise the forests on the other.

The debate between nature and culture has been furthered by the papers attracted by the Australian Forest History Society since 1988. At three ground breaking conferences, the last in 1997, the history and philosophy of forest managers and the forests they guard has been scrutinised. Comparisons have been made, both in time and place. Practices in Europe and America have been used to inform our local efforts, old forests and new ones are evaluated. In Forestry, local history can come into its own, but at the same time it can be linked with larger questions: questions of communities, of interrelationships. The ever-changing forest is a good title for their journal. The picture is never static, decline can be succeeded by regeneration, the trees grow and life goes on.

14. THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT AND THE CHANGING STATUS OF FORESTS

The Forest Heritage

THEMES: NSW HO 9 Environment

NATIONAL 1 tracing the evolution of the continent's special environments

AHC HT.03 Developing local and regional economies

HT.03.03.04 Utilising forest resources

HT.03.03.0404 Managing forest resources

HT.07.05.10.03 Conserving cultural or natural heritage

This chapter traces the change of attitude, starting in the 1970s, to forests, rainforests to start with, and then extended to the whole forest heritage. The roots of the movement had been apparent some decades before, but the intervention of the Commonwealth Government in 1974, with the possibility of federal money, changed perceptions. The Terania Creek Inquiry focussed attention on Forestry practices, and called into question some of its previous policies. The National Park & Wildlife Service was set up to conserve, rather than to 'utilise' forests. The State Forests of NSW had to adjust to a modified outlook and purpose.

The 1960S were a decade of changing perceptions, and changing priorities. The World War was over, and after a mammoth effort of allocating vast resources of manpower and materials to the war machine, reconstruction began. Australia had suffered a shortage of materials during the war, including forest products. Timber was in short supply, after the draining away of manpower into the armed forces. Expectations had changed.

The world of the old timber-getters had almost vanished. The lonely sleeper-cutter, the 'man versus nature' ideal of the axeman, was no longer the same. Mechanisation at the timber mills and in the forests themselves had changed work practices. Labour, traditionally poorly paid in the timber industry, was now in demand everywhere. Skilled woodsmen were hard to get, and hard to keep. Tractors and bulldozers came into use, clearing forest roads, making remote timber stands more accessible, knocking over trees and saplings, cutting swathes through the forest. World War II had created an increased demand for rainforest timbers especially, and rainforest logging was extended into previously uncutover hillsides, on the North Coast escarpments.

At the same time, better research by foresters and ecologists alike and wider means of communication, were leading to a better understanding of the rainforest environment. The necessity to conserve rainforests not only for future harvest, but as valuable ecosystems in their own right came to be acknowledged, firstly by the scientists, and then by a new group of politically activated conservationists.

In 1967, the National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW was set up to act as a management body for the conservation and protection of natural areas. A program of definition and gazettal of National Parks began. In 1982, the transfer of major rainforest areas from the Forestry Commission management to the National Parks & Wildlife Service was under way. This was the culmination of a long and complex social and political process.

Some of the forest areas disputed had been the subject of intermittent conservation efforts for almost a century. A national park in the Border Ranges had been suggested in the late 19th century. Ideas from America, the ideals of reservation of a particularly beautiful or spectacular natural area, had been pursued at Yellowstone National Park there in the 1870s. George Perkins March had written his influential book Man and Nature in 1864. These ideas had inspired an Australian visitor, Robert Collins, to return and agitate for a reservation in the McPherson Range (Proudfoot 1984:53-54).

Significant community support for a national park on the Nightcap Range was apparent from 1910, when it was compared to the Blue Mountains for its beauty and health-bringing qualities. In the 1930s at Lismore, arguments about protecting the watershed at the head of local rivers were used. A proposal for the reservation of the escarpment forests between New England and Dorrigo National Parks also go back some decades.

Areas like the Border Ranges and Nightcap supported possibly the best remaining stands of rainforest in NSW, and had obvious attractions as dramatic mountain landscapes. Paradoxically, there was a lack of specific interest in rainforest as a different ecosystem to eucalypt forests from which the great bulk of timber was drawn by the Forestry Commission after the cedar had been 'creamed'. The perceptions of 'scrub', of 'brush', rather inexact, perjorative terms, used by the settlers, was carried over into Forestry perceptions. As late as the 1970s Forestry had a management policy of converting rainforest gullies to the preferred eucalypt forest by logging, burning, and planting flooded gum and blackbutt. Early silvicultural efforts concentrated on plantings of Hoop Pine and Bunya Pine (Prineas 1984:12).

Demand for rainforest timbers increased from the 1930s with the development of veneer technology and the establishment of brushwood peeling mills. Increased pressure to log rainforest timber in the Border Ranges, triggered off a conservation conflict which grew as time passed.

The Conservation movement, buoyed up with a victory in the Colong Caves limestone mining dispute, and a mounting popular interest in ecology, was recruiting members and support. Their first major success was in the Boyd Plateau forests dispute, and then they turned their attention to the Border Ranges, already espoused by Murwillumbah people. 'This city-country axis set a standard pattern for political action which was to be followed by other conservation organisations such as the National Parks Association in later efforts to to dedicate rainforest national Parks on the Nightcap Range and the Clarence and Hasting Valleys'(Prineas 1984:13).

Commonwealth Interest and the Concept of The National Estate

Another player entered the field when the Commonwealth Government under the Whitlam Labor party, brought down the Report of the National Estate in 1974, increasing attention to the Natural Environment, with a strong endorsement for conservation through reservation of parks and reserves. This turned attention to existing forestry practices, and for the first time highlighted them as 'an issue for public debate',(Report 1974:122-133) .

A feature of Commonwealth endorsement came in the form of small grants to conservation bodies. Suddenly there was money for administration and special projects, the conservation lobbies became more vocal and better organised. They began to capture the high ground of public opinion.

The Report, moreover, called into question some of the Forestry practices throughout Australia. It pointed out that until recently, Forestry bodies had been interested mainly in maintaining forests by selective logging for timber production, but new factors were emerging that might cause a radical change. The first was the increase in popular demand for recreation in forest areas, the second was the new intensification of foresting activities, especially large allocations of areas for wood-chipping for export, and a greatly increased pine plantation program. Linked with this was a policy of clear-felling in coastal forests.

These threatened certain values not linked with timber production, values that were prized as important to heritage: the aesthetic appeal of forests, the loss of wildlife habitats, and the uncertainty of environmental impacts such as nutrient loss, erosion, water quality, the effect on drainage systems, even fisheries. The report pointed out that the public role in the use of the forests, and restraints on timber production for environmental protection, were common practice overseas.

The forecast was for increasing protests and public alarm about forest depletion and degradation unless there was a modification in forest policy to take account