

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LUDLOW FOREST AREA

Compiled by J. Watson. 13th July, 1966

The Tuart (*Eucalyptus gomphacephla*) is in forest form in an area of about 5,100 acres bounded in the south by the Sabina River and in the north by the Capel River, whilst its western boundary is the estuary and east is the swamp country and farm land. The Ludlow area is the centre of the tuart forest which, in its virgin state, was mostly open grasslands with an understorey of peppermint trees (*Agonis flexuosa*). Due to grazing and early-day burning, the character of the forest has somewhat changed, but in places still retains part of its park-like appearance.

The first people known to be users of the forest were aborigines but, being nomadic, it could not be said that they could claim ownership. With the arrival of white people in Western Australia, most land became the property of the Crown. The tuart forest came into this category and was used by early settlers, possibly on leasehold, for grazing of their stock. At some later date Governor Stirling was granted 10,000 acres for his own use and this included most of the tuart forest area. Some of this land reverted to the Crown and eventually became available for sale to individual settlers. This is how the name given to this area, "Stirling Estate", came into being. In 1918 "the Forest Act" was passed and soon after the Government began buying back from the settlers nearly all the area upon which the tuart forest was growing. This action was possibly influenced by recognition of the tuart timber as being, by reason of its interlocked grain, very strong and non-splitting, thus making it very suitable for the construction of top rails and undercarriages of railway wagons, trucks, tram-cars and such like. There is also little chemical reaction of metal to wood in tuart and metal does not rust in tuart as it does in most other timbers. Another consideration could have been that this particular area of tuart is the only one in forest formation, although the tree occurs intermittently all the way up the coast to Yancheep. There are many tuart trees in King's Park, Peppermint Grove and around Mosman. The tree has an optimum height of 150 feet and a girth of 33 feet.

In 1919 the area described in the first paragraph was gazetted No. 1 and No. 2 State Forest; its area being 6,517 acres. It is also very interesting to note that the timber on all roads in the No. 1 and No. 2 State forests is reserved to the Crown and NOT to the Shire Council, as is the case in most other shires. A special proclamation was passed in 1918 to make tuart on the roadsides between Capel and the Sabina River, the railway and the ocean, as Crown timber. In 1921-22, a Forest School was erected on the departmental land at Ludlow by a Perth contractor named Cowell. This school was for the purpose of training youths for the field staff of the Forests Department. The first intake was in 1921 when nine youths of school-leaving age were accepted. Two courses were conducted later and when the school closed down in 1927, twenty-two youths had taken up positions with the field staff of the department. The first instructor at the Forest School was Mr R. Davey in 1921. Mr T.N. Stoate, on loan from N.S.W. followed and served in 1922-23. Mr A. Rule came in 1924. Both Mr Davey and Mr Stoate were graduated of Adelaide University and Mr Rule was a graduate of Aberdeen University. Mr Davey left Western Australia but Mr Stoate later became conservator of the Forests of Western Australia and later, Professor of Forestry at the University of Washington, USA. Mr Rule left Western Australia and became a forestry consultant in various parts of the world. In 1921-22, the whole of the tuart area was fenced and the grazing rights sold by public auction.

A small plot of *Pinus Pinaster* was planted experimentally near the Forest School (1922) on a four by four feet spacing. Also in that year a sawmill was erected at Wonnerup and over-mature tuart trees were milled here. Mr R. Drew managed the mill but it closed down in 1928 having served its purpose by then.

Amongst the timber men at the mill were Mr G. Parkes of Donnybrook, Messrs L and E Warner and Mr Moriarty, all of Ludlow. Logs were felled and brought or moved by bullocks and whim (with Mr Ned Reilly as bullock driver and Howard Thomas as "swamper"). Horse-drawn trucks took the logs to Wonnerup: Mr Harry Froome was the driver of the team. As the over-mature trees were removed, the area was cleaned up and the debris burned and pine planting of a considerable area was carried out right up to 1939. At the present time, about 1,340 acres are under pine in the tuart area, nearly all of which is *Pinus Pinaster* or *Pinus Radiata*.

-- A small "spot-mill" was erected at Ludlow in 1928 to cut pine thinnings from old pine trees which were planted many years previously and east of the railway line and thus not in tuart country. This mill was managed by James Jarrahwood Howlett and, in the latter days of its activities, by a man called Mr Adams. The mill closed in 1936. Re-forestation of tuart is by natural regeneration but this cannot be considered to be very successful for complete re-stocking. Young seedlings grow excellently in ash-beds formed by burning logs, or in crowns of fallen trees, but they appear to be choked out by the rapid growth of grass elsewhere. The intense heat of burning logs and crown recesses retards grass growth for several years. A point of interest is that the tree has been introduced into Morocco in North Africa and is doing well. Seedlings were raised from seeds sent from Ludlow. In 1946 a sawmill was erected at Ludlow for milling the thinning of pine. A few tuart logs are milled for such timber as is required for special purposes. Around this mill, situated near the original Forest School, a small community has grown up - about 50 adults and children, who live in 15 houses. They are all dependent upon the Forestry Department for their livelihood.

Field Staff based on Ludlow

Overseers:	R. Banfield	1920	
Foresters:	L.N. Weston	1921-22	1928-34
	B. Trainor	1923-24	
	J.E. Watson	1924-28	1932-38
	H.E. Dawson	1938-60	
	G. Styles	1961-	

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SOCIETY NEWS

CAN YOU HELP? At the Kent Street end of Fig Tree Lane stands a Fig tree, there is also another one on the Beachfront. Would you have any idea how old these trees are? If you do, please contact Mrs. Hilda Lord either at the Museum on Tuesday mornings or on 52 1714.

SAUSAGE SIZZLE!!! RELAX AFTER YOUR MORNING'S LABOUR AT THE MUSEUM ON TUESDAY, 17th SEPTEMBER - COME ALONG TO A SAUSAGE SIZZLE IN THE WORKSHOP AT 12.30pm - THE COST IS \$2 PER HEAD.

ATTENDANCES - The good news is that we had 528 more people through the door in the first six months of 1996 than we did in the same period in 1995. Unfortunately, the increase is only reflected in the Pensioner section of admissions. These were, in fact, up by 706 (551 in 1995 to 1257 in 1996) but both the Adult and Children's section were down. (Adults - 932 in 1995 to 810 in 1996 - down 122. Children 553 in 1995 to 497 in 1996 - down 56).

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