

Maydena – the Rise and Fall of a Logging Town

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Introduction

This paper investigates the formative years of Australian Newsprint Mills (ANM), centred around the construction of the Boyer Mill on the Derwent River in 1940 and the logging town of Maydena constructed in 1948. Planning for the company's logging operation in the Styx, Tyenna and Florentine Valleys in southern Tasmania, began in 1934, resulting in a large Concession being approved by Parliament for these areas. A controversial addition was the addition of over 3,000 acres under Mt Field West, pushed through parliament by the Ogilvie Government in 1950. The purpose built logging town of Maydena became the bush HQ, where innovations in forest management were attempted. The new company introduced trained foresters and other managers who managed skilled local bushmen with a sawmilling background. The impact of the new culture on the old was effectively the colonising of a valley, and the sociology of the valley is also investigated.¹

In 1996, I undertook the Maydena Project for Forest Management, a Division of ANM.² The oral history-based study aimed at recording the social and industrial history of a purpose built logging town, centred around the extraction of old growth forest from ANM's large Concession centred on the Florentine Valley.³ Over a two year period, over 80 former employees and their spouses were interviewed.⁴ They included fallers, machine operators, high-lead riggers, mechanics, drivers, managers, clerks and foresters.⁵ During the course of the Project it became apparent that I was examining a human as well as a physical landscape, with the one interacting and shaping the other in a mutual - but not always compatible - way.⁶

This paper is drawn from the research for a forth-coming book on the ANM Maydena Project.

A book of 185,000 words with detailed index, based on the interviews and research, has been drafted for publication.⁷

Bushmen and 'Daddies'

In the Australian 1950s children's book by Leslie Rees, DIGIT DICK visits Tasmania. Among the many adventures Digit and his friend Boska the budgerigar witness the 'end of a Swamp Gum.'

¹Thanks to several people for contributing to the debate, including Curly Humphries, Kim Creak & Graeme Sargison, all foresters and former ANM senior staff .

²Now the Fibre Division of Fletcher-Challenge.

³The steering committee included Curly Humphreys, Don Frankcombe, with initial support from Graeme Ogilvy. Gaye Coleman acted as administrative co-ordinator.

⁴Tapes were transcribed by audio typist Jan Horton.

⁵Since then 10 of the interviewees have passed away.

⁶see Schama, Simon Landscape and Memory, London, 1995.

⁷ MacFie, Peter Maydena The Newsprint Logging Town, unpubl draft, 2003 & 2012.

The tree is cut down by 'two men in shirts and rough hats carrying axes...' who 'make a platform and cut down the 'great swamp gum.' The tree complains,

That's what's going to happen to me

I shan't much longer be a tree.

Two timbermen with axe and all

Will sever my trunk and down I'll fall.

'I do feel sorry for the poor tree,' said Dick.... But I suppose it can't be helped. Daddies must have their newspapers in the morning.'⁸ The dilemma in the Digit Dick fable is felt by many, then and now. The fable also illustrates the male-ness of the industry and the consumer of the paper, and most significantly, the bush-worker is illustrated providing for the needs of the urban dweller. As producer and consumer, they needed each other.

Land Users & National Identity

My interest in the dilemma over land use and choices, (the sort historians love to explore), grew from a study of Mt Field National Park, the island's first such reserve, established in 1917 in central Tasmania. Contrasts in the social setting and conflicts over land-use between settlers, saw-millers and early conservationists who established the Park were part of on-going tensions. The debate also involved ANM who were allocated a section of the Park in 1948 in controversial circumstances.⁹

Apart from Watson's book on the forests of northern NSW, and the recently published, *The People's Forest*, by Borschmann (1999), no comparable approach in Australia attempts to analyse conflict over forestry in human and social terms.¹⁰ Most authors prefer to concentrate on environmental impact of logging in forests.

Paper & Nationalism

An understanding of the era must be set against the markedly different concepts of national identity then and now. Until the 1980's, Australian nationalism was symbolised in locally owned industries that served as icons for national pride, these were not only the mundane items epitomised by brands like Arnotts biscuits, Vegemite and IXL Jams, but attempts to develop a national motor, air-craft, air-line, and ship-building industries.

While John Dargavel and others see the development of the Australian paper industry centred around the movement of international capital, the general aim of all Australians of all classes born before 1960 was to see an image of national self sufficiency.¹¹ This image extended to an

⁸Rees, Leslie Digit Dick and the Tasmanian Devil, Sydney, n/d, c 1953, p 26-7.

⁹MacFie, Peter Mt Field - the Evolution of Tasmania's First National Park, unpubl report, P. W. & H., Hobart, 1991.

¹⁰Watson, Ian Fighting Over the Forests, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990; and Borschmann, Greg The People's Forest, a Living History of the Australian Bush, People's Forest Press, Blackheath, Canberra, 1999.

¹¹There is no doubt the Australian newspaper industry involved overseas interests in international paper, including Crown Zellerbach, but the motives of the earlier Australian company still appear nationally competitive. (see Dargavel, John

independent newspaper and media industry, and included an Australian supply of newsprint - all outside foreign control - and made from native timbers. But until the Boyer mill opened in 1941, Australia was totally reliant on imported newsprint.¹²

The Colonised Valley

The Tyenna Valley from where ANM drew its work-force was 'settled' or colonised twice, first by the settlers, (1880-1930) and then by the Company (1930-1991.)¹³

From self interest, the Two Cultures that were integrated in the Tyenna Valley via a symbiotic relationship, but not without problems and pitfalls. The stories, the characters, and bush skills came from the old culture, while management issues and decisions on new technology or promotion came from the new culture. The former was strongly egalitarian (and often Catholic, the latter, paternalistic and hierarchical, (and predominantly Anglican).

Whatever the source of finance and the motives, decisions effecting the lives of a local community were made by Melbourne-based investors, a familiar story even in a post economic rationalist era. A small inland district of Tasmania was to become the place where national identity was epitomised, based on the newsprint logging industry and two purpose-built townships at New Norfolk and Maydena. Rapid post-war expansion was followed by the end of old growth logging and subsequent closure of the logging town of Maydena. From the 1980's the Derwent and Tyenna Valleys became a testing ground for the impact of new post-national and inter-nationalised forms of ownership.

Historical Background - The Tyenna Valley

The Tyenna Valley and Florentine Valleys spread around the Mt Field Plateau like a giant 'question-mark.' The Tyenna River runs south into the Derwent River, and the Florentine north also to the Derwent. In 1917 Tasmania's first National Park was opened, centred around the unique alpine vegetation of the Mt Field Plateau. The dilemma over land use was apparent at the Park's opening ceremony where a feature of the afternoon's entertainment was a chopping match.

The first Europeans to explore the area was a party led by Surveyor James Calder assisted by former convict and expert bushmen, Alexander McKay in 1837.

Fashioning the Forests, OUP, 1995, p42.) New Zealand company Tasman, an antecedent of Fletcher-Challenge, was involved from the 1940's, expanding its influence through the 1950's. see Marchak, P. Logging the Globe, Montreal, 1992. p222.

¹²Apart from the Rawson thesis ending in 1955, no detailed study of the ANM's corporate history has been undertaken to date. Although ANM's corporate history was outside the scope of the Maydena Project, an understanding of corporate decisions, pulp production, and implications of these on logging operations and the work-force was necessary.

¹³There is apparently no evidence Aborigines occupied the Tyenna-Florentine area at the time of European settlement. see Ryan, Lyndall The Aboriginal Tasmanians, 1981.

After climbing onto the Mt Field plateau, Calder's party descended down the steep, rocky slopes of Mt Field West to the Gordon River. Recovering at the camp, Calder commented on the exhausting trip where:

... the greatest exertions have been made and the most laborious and harassing journeys undertaken.... Every man in the camp is suffering ... and not a nerve or muscle has been left unpunished.¹⁴

Settlers & Clearance

From the 1880's, settlers took up land in the Tyenna Valley, based on trapping and small farming.¹⁵ The village of Tyenna was established as a remote out-post. Exploration of the South West & Central Tasmania for minerals continued throughout the last quarter of the century. Bushmen like Robert Marriott guided parties from Tyenna into the wet forests. A railway to Tasmania's West Coast was surveyed and the idea abandoned in 1898.

The Tyenna Valley was also the home of the Thylacine or Tasmanian Tiger, now thought to be extinct. The last known specimen, a male, was brought from the Florentine Valley to the Beaumaris Zoo, Hobart in 1930, probably by Elias Churchill. He snared eight 'tigers', including 4 in the Florentine and the around the Needles, areas where ANM's logging concession was granted seven years later.¹⁶

Settlers and saw-millers who moved into the Tyenna Valley were hastened by the gradual spread of the Derwent Valley Railway, which curled its way up the valley, reaching Fitzgerald in 1917.¹⁷ New bush workers arrived from sawmills in the southern forests, Bruny Island and the east coast. Many small and several large sawmills were built along the line using sidings and small spur-lines to rail timber. The largest were the Huon Co Mill at Tyenna, Gourlays at Fitzgerald and Risbys past Junee, where timber tram-ways extended into the bush. The railway however served two potentially conflicting purposes, sawn timber and visits by excursionists and anglers to Mt Field National Park and adjacent streams.¹⁸

Historical Background - Newsprint from Eucalypts

In the board-rooms of Melbourne and the laboratories of scientific bodies, decisions were being made which would alter the character and employment patterns of the remote Tasmanian valley.

WWI left Australia destitute of newsprint. Among the many who felt the isolation was a young Australian journalist Keith Murdoch, who broke military censorship to expose the news of the debacle at Gallipoli. He was steered through the ranks of Melbourne's *Herald & Weekly Times* by

¹⁴Love, A, 1986; The Journey to the Huon via Mt Field and Lake Pedder in 1837 by James Erskine Calder, *Tasmanian Tramp* 26, pp 11-17.

¹⁵see Gowland, R. & K. Trampled Wilderness, Hobart ,1976.

¹⁶G. Hocking in The South West Book, A Tasmanian Wilderness, ACF, 1978, p 125.

¹⁷Stokes, H. J. W. (Jim) *The Derwent Valley Railway*, Australian Railway Historical Society Bulletin, June 1975, pp 125-142.

¹⁸see MacFie, Mt Field op cit.

Theodore Fink, becoming managing director in 1928, before falling out with his mentor.¹⁹ Today the Fink and Murdoch 'camps' are divided over the claim for the newsprint industry.²⁰ Both men had witnessed Australia's vulnerability and determined to not let happen again.²¹ Theodore's son Thorold Fink was given responsibility for establishing the first phase of the industry.²²

The idea of a newsprint industry from Australian timbers wasn't new, but preliminary tests and European attitudes were disappointing. In 1923 L.R. Benjamin, a young chemist who had trained in Western Australia under I. H. Boas, arrived in Tasmania to discuss a survey of the island's timber resources. They had both worked for the fore-runner of the CSIRO.²³ The Tasmanian Forestry Department conducted a survey of the Florentine Valley in 1922, while the Commonwealth provided sea-planes for aerial surveying, all with the intention of assessing timber resources for the manufacture of paper from native species.²⁴

Tyenna's First Value-Added Industry

Another smaller player had already seen the possibilities of the Tyenna Valley. After a failed attempt in Victoria's Yarra Valley, Hans Hecht, a German established a large peg factory at New Norfolk 22 miles (or 50 kms) north of Hobart in 1926. Using the white and stainless sassafras for its famous dolly pegs, the Pioneer Woodware Co was given forest permit blocks in the Tyenna Valley from where logs were extracted by men and horses, then railed to New Norfolk. Compared to the saw mills which produced only sawn timber, in its small way the peg factory became the first sustainable and value added industry based on timber in the Derwent Valley. In extracting under-storey species, the PWC complimented ANM's interest in falling of the dominant eucalyptus species, and the two companies shared a converging history.²⁵

Australian Newsprint Mills – the Other Culture

Two paper giants battled for access to Tasmanian timber; the Collins House group of - which eventually set up the Burnie paper Mill in 1936- and a newspaper syndicate of Fairfax and the *Herald & Weekly Times*. This group was led by Keith Murdoch and Theodore Fink, attracted by large tracts of virgin bush and cheap hydroelectricity. They lobbied the Tasmanian Labor Government then managing the severe Depression. The initial company was known as the Derwent Valley Paper Co, whose nominated promoter was Thorold Fink.²⁶ Under the terms of

¹⁹Garden, Don Theodore Fink, a Talent for Ubiquity, Melbourne University Press , 1998, p 227.

²⁰see Monks, John: Elisabeth Murdoch - Two Lives, Melbourne, 1995, p 125-6.

²¹Garden, op cit., p 228.

²²ibid, p 228.

²³The Institute of Science & Industry, see Rawson, Jacqueline *A History of the Australian Paper Making Industry, 1818-1951*, Univ. of Melbourne, 1954, p 60 ff

²⁴MacFie, Peter Maydena The Newsprint Logging Town, unpubl draft.

²⁵MacFie, Maydena op cit.

²⁶Son of Theodore and rival for Keith Murdoch for the head of the H & W T. see Garden op cit.

The Florentine Valley Wood-Pulp and Paper Industry Act of 1932, the company acquired a large concession.²⁷

Ocean Falls, BC, & a Bushman

The reformed company began serious research into newsprint produced from eucalypt. ANM poached L. R. Benjamin from the Mussen group. In 1934 a trial shipment of eucalyptus logs was sent to Ocean Falls, British Columbia, for test in the paper mill of Crown Zellerbach, the Canadian multinational with whom ANM had a mutual industrial and financial relationship.²⁸

Tyenna Bushman Rex Salter recalled cutting the logs with his brother-in-law near Fitzgerald, the head village on the Derwent Valley Line in the Tyenna Valley.²⁹ The Canadian long-shore-men rolled the eucalypt logs into the sea from the ship's deck, as was traditional with the conifers of North America, only to see the logs from Down Under sink like a rock.³⁰

By 1934 the Finks³¹ had been marginalised within the *Herald & Weekly Times*. While they were in Canada investigating the processing possibilities of eucalypts, Murdoch and John Fairfax formed Australian Newsprint Mills to see the project through.³²

In an Australian first, paper from Tasmanian eucalypts processed in British Columbia was used in the 26 July 1935 edition of the Hobart *Mercury* and then in the 22 August edition of Adelaide's *News*. (An archive copy of the *Mercury* is distinctly yellow, as the process was far from perfect.) Benjamin and his staff returned to Tasmania and established a laboratory at Sandy Bay, a Hobart suburb.³³

Establishing the Industry

The 1934 Bush Fires

The tests in Canada were promising, but just when the new industry seemed viable, severe bushfires in 1934 appeared to threaten the viability of the new industry. Apparently started by trappers to the north of the Florentine Valley, the fires swept down into the Tyenna Valley. Several sawmills, miles of tram-ways and stands of timber were destroyed. Although several homes and a church were burnt, no lives were lost.³⁴

From ANM's view, the fires were a salutary lesson. The cavalier attitude of settlers threatened the future industry, as did the sparks from the steam engines bringing relief fire-fighters and assistance to the threatened villages. Benjamin saw both at first hand and convened a meeting at

²⁷In 1932 the Collins group's proposal was based on the forests of the NW Coast. The company (APPM) had its mill built at Burnie in 1936.

²⁸Dargavel, J. B. *The Development of Tasmanian Wood Industries: A Radical Analysis*, Ph D thesis, ANU, 1982, p168-9.

²⁹Salter, Rex ANM Maydena Project. (ANM/MP (MaydenaProject.) Rex joined the police force shortly after, retiring as inspector.

³⁰MacFie, Maydena op cit.

³¹Son of Theodore and rival for Keith Murdoch for the head of the H & W T. see Garden op cit.

³²Garden, op cit., p230.

³³MacFie, Maydena, op cit.

³⁴ibid.

the village of Tyenna with concerned locals who also feared the loss of the future industry and employment opportunities.³⁵

Surveys Gangs

Bushmen whose skills learnt the ways of the bush included families like the Marriotts who were the descendants of convicts. These bushmen led the survey expeditions into the Florentine and Styx Valleys. One of these teams was led by famous bushman John McCallum (born 1880) whose house still stands by the Tyenna River. John knew the bush intimately, having worked on the survey of the Great Western Railway to Queenstown in 1898 and taken Twelvetrees and other geologists into the south west around 1908.³⁶ Two of ANM's survey teams, including McCallums, were caught in the 1934 fires and escaped by sheltering in a creek bed of the Styx Valley.

The Directors Visit

Despite the fire's severity, large sections of the Concession remained untouched. From 1937 onward, the Company went ahead with its plans. In 1935 and 1937 (now Sir) Keith Murdoch and his new wife Elisabeth, accompanied by a party representing the ANM's newspaper shareholders, explored the Concession by horse-back. They were led by experienced bush-men including Allan Rainbird, aged 84 when interviewed.³⁷ He recalled Mrs Murdoch (now Dame Elisabeth Murdoch) with affection. He hired a saddle horse for her and remembered her insistence on 'getting on the tea-towel' at the camp site.³⁸ Her husband was a sterner figure.³⁹ Referring to Keith Murdoch's visit to assess the forest of the Florentine Valley, Allan commented wryly, 'You wouldn't buy a pig in a bag' would you?'⁴⁰

The 1937 *Florentine Valley Act* formalised the reformed company's rights over the forest under a Concession system. ANM had powers usually only invested in the Crown, including access and entry controls, ostensibly to protect the forests from fires. The main attraction in the Florentine Valley concession was a huge stand of Euc regnans or Swamp Gums, standing in a one-generation forest of 200 year old mature trees underneath the steep wall of Mt Field West.

Meanwhile, as work began on the Boyer Mill near New Norfolk, Benjamin ordered rolling stock based on North American industry's experience.

³⁵ibid

³⁶Gowland, op cit., p 215-6.

³⁷Since deceased.

³⁸Dame Elisabeth's 'hands-on attitude was still apparent in a recent (1999) *Australia Story*, featured on the ABC, where she swept the floor of an art gallery prior to an opening despite being its patron.

³⁹They are the parents of media magnate Rupert Murdoch.

⁴⁰Rainbird, Allan ANM/MP. Since deceased. (That is, 'You wouldn't buy something without looking at it first?')

New Alliances

Australia and North America

The industry's early integration with North American logging practices and paper industry was to have a profound impact on the newsprint and timber industry in Australia. Paul Freydig, an American WWI fighter pilot, became ANM's first Logging Manager from 1935, returning to the USA in 1941.⁴¹ The cross-Pacific cooperation was fostered at several levels. While Benjamin studied the operation of mills and new technology, Keith Murdoch was forging strong links with the American interests, especially at a political level. He met with Roosevelt in Washington and later instigated the Australian- American Association, which formalised mutual business interests.⁴² Politically and militarily Australia's loyalties were to Britain, but the pre-war links of ANM's directors with the USA anticipated post war re-alignments.⁴³

War & A New Mill

With Australia's newsprint supplies cut off from Europe by Axis submarines, the Boyer Mill came into production. At the opening ceremony in May 1941 co-director Warwick Fairfax gave Keith Murdoch (a rare) compliment on his foresight and drive. The Boyer Mill was strategically placed on the Derwent River near the old town of New Norfolk, half way between the forests and the port of Hobart, and beside the existing Derwent Valley Railway. Barges pulled by tugs hauled the finished rolls of paper downstream and transferred at Hobart to ships for mainland ports and newspapers.

ANM's Bush Operation

Starting in 1940, ANM' bush operation had been poorly documented, due to war-time restrictions on newsprint, and publicity about an industry declared mandatory, whose workers operated under the Manpower Act. Oral history proved a last chance opportunity to document this period.

Camps & Spur Lines

ANM took advantage of the existing infrastructure both industrial and social to establish the industry. The rail head village of Fitzgerald acted as the base in the Tyenna Valley. From there ANM constructed spur lines off the existing Derwent Valley Railway to reach the Euc. regnans stands at Junee, Nicholson's Spur and Risby's Basin. Bush workers from the sawmills became the company's new employees, and their bush craft allowed the logs to be hauled from the forests.⁴⁴ A new logging camp was established in the bush at Junee. Men were housed in relative comfort, with a camp kitchen, hot water at communal facilities and heated huts. The huts were laid out in a military style quadrangle.

⁴¹MacFie, Maydena, op cit.

⁴²Herald & Weekly Times Ltd, Sir Keith Murdoch, H&WT, Melbourne, 1952.

⁴³MacFie, Maydena op cit.

⁴⁴Streets in the later township of Maydena were named after the earlier Tyenna Valley saw-millers.

Many of the older generation of bush men were returned WWI veterans, including Percy Statton VC. He acted as camp cook at both the Junee Camp and on the next line constructed into the Styx Valley in 1941⁴⁵. He was remembered by many interviewees, who, as young lads, teased him with outlandish practical jokes which Percy never left unanswered.⁴⁶

New Technology

While used traditional loading methods, ANM had priority access to newly arrived American Caterpillar crawler tractors equipped with power take-off. Gus Cashman was one of the first to drive the new machines.⁴⁷

Apart from Caterpillars, another aspect of the Americanisation of the industry was the use of high lead riggers who climbed a major tree – usually the tallest in the locality - using harness and foot spurs, rather than the traditional set of spiralling 'shoes' or boards. Tree tops were then lopped by the rigger, who then set up the bare tree trunk pole as a living 'mast' with giant pulleys and rigging cables. The most famous of the high lead workers was 'Sam The Rigger' Donaldson whose dare-devil feats became legendary. These included dancing on the severed top of a cable tree, often 150 feet above the ground.⁴⁸

During the years of World War II, logs were loaded onto rail wagons with crotch rigs using the steam driven winches from the sawmilling industry or later Caterpillar tractor's power 'take-off.' Huge Swamp Gums were logged, including the 'Big Tree' at Nicholson's Spur, recalled with regret.⁴⁹ All were railed along company installed spur lines to the Main Line and thence to Boyer Mill, over 25 miles away via a winding, narrow valley.

The Styx - the Cataract Bridge & Camp

While Junee was being logged a new rail spur line was constructed into the nearby Styx Valley. On its junction with the Derwent Valley Railway, ANM erected Karanja, the Company's first small village which acted as a service centre with a few homes and a workshop. Many legends arose from the Styx line and Cataract Camp. A long, graceful, trestle railway bridge was constructed over Cataract Creek, and a camp of tents and huts built nearby. At Diogenes Creek, near the head of the Styx spur line, a Skyline system was erected over a deep gully to winch logs back, the only time this variation on cable logging was used by ANM.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, at war's end another camp was established for Risby's Basin off the Tyenna Valley, where a small Climax loco hauled trucks from the forest to the main line.

⁴⁵Betty Barratt, ANM/MP.

⁴⁶Beattie, Dennis ANM/MP.

⁴⁷Cashman, Gus ANM/MP. Since deceased

⁴⁸MacFie, Maydena op cit.

⁴⁹George Watson, ANM/MP. Regretted and photographed by forester A. D. Helm in 1942. See photo in *The People's Forest*, op cit., p 69.

⁵⁰MacFie, Maydena, op cit.

Post-War Expansion

New Managers

Post war, ANM's directors wanted to double newsprint production, and began looking for new staff at all levels. A key appointment was that of West Australian S. L. Kessell. He was a major figure in establishing the profession of forestry, initiating the Canberra School of Forestry with others, and the professional body, the Institute of Foresters of Australia, for which he was founding president.⁵¹

In 1943, in a study for the Federal Government, Kessell reported that the war-time shortage of Australian timber was due to short-sighted historical and cultural attitudes:

The Anglo Saxon settlers who populated Australia brought with them no tradition of forestry ... and for a hundred years or more, the forests were looked upon as the enemy of progress to be slaughtered.... Even the forests which have been retained have been operated as mines to be worked out and largely discarded or ... left in a semi-neglected condition.⁵²

In 1944 Tasmania's Forestry Department asked Kessell to report on the state's timber industry. He was then Controller of Timber, head of the war-time Federal department. In his report for the Tasmanian Government, Kessell commented on Tasmania's forest policy and management practices. He wrote a wide-ranging and pungent report, including unflattering comments on ANM's forestry operations.⁵³ In his introductory comment he was emphatic that,

The remaining forests of Tasmania are only poor remnants of the magnificent stands of timber which occupied much of the present developed parts of the island.... [I recommend] that no further commitments be entered into by the Government involving the supply of mature timber ... to any new pulping or other similar wood-using industry.⁵⁴

Kessell was critical of the lack of planning in Tasmania and the failure of the saw-millers and politicians alike to see the finite nature of the timber which he described as 'forest capital'. As part of his study, Kessell inspected the Boyer Mill and bush operation:

The Boyer plant rails logs in from virgin forest and saws them into cordwood of pulping size in its own sawmilling plant.

At the present time [ANM] is logging the forest practically on a face without forestry supervision. In the course of the operations good immature young trees are damaged and taken out and no adequate provision made for seed trees in

⁵¹Meyer, Athol *The Foresters*, 1985, p 53.

⁵²Evidence to the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission Appointed under the *National Security Act*, File No 1943/638, Australian Archives, ACT.

⁵³Carron, L T, 1985; *A History of Forestry in Australia*; ANU, Canberra, p68.

⁵⁴Kessell, HA/PP, No 42, 1945.

the event of a heavy frost destroying the seed on the ground or the seedling crop before the trees reach the seed bearing stage....⁵⁵

Kessell went on to suggest that the highest grade logs should be used for the production of high-grade sawn timber, with the 'pulp requirements [supplied] from off-cut material and second quality logs'. Reflecting the selective logging approach he stressed the urgent need for the 'education of bush workers in the protection of immature trees (in) falling operations.' He made further wide-ranging recommendations for the management of Tasmania's private and public forests, including the development of plantations.⁵⁶

Two years later Kessell (after being initially offered a position with APPM's Burnie paper mill,) became General Manager at ANM's Boyer Mill. His reserved nature contrasted with Benjamin's amiable manner. As a key figure in Australian forestry, Kessell was able to introduce many forward looking approaches to forestry management. These included planning for reforestation. In 1954 he initiated a series of post-graduate scholarships, the first being used by Max Gilbert who studied the life-cycle of the wet temperate forests of the Florentine Valley for his PhD.⁵⁷

Into the Florentine

After initial controversy, ANM's men and machinery cut their way into the Florentine Valley. The general impression was that everything ANM did was 'big' and at the forefront of industry change in Australia. VIP's and industry representatives inspected the bush workings in the Florentine Valley.

The Depot & Marshalling Yards

To gain quicker access to the Florentine Valley forests, ANM decided to build a logging centre at the head of the Tyenna Valley. The camp was to be based on the facility already established for Risby's Basin, and similar to the Junee Camp. A rail-head for log assembly was expanded and known as the Marshalling Yards. Here a Depot with extensive workshops developed, and in 1948, a township for the workforce- Maydena – was begun.

Trains to Trucks

Access to the untouched forest of Euc regnans in the Florentine Valley was over The Gap, a high ridge separating it from the Tyenna Valley. In 1947 a railway was proposed and survey teams under legendary bushman Mick Cashion went into the wet forest.⁵⁸ For a number of reasons, including the limestone geology of the area, the rail route was not feasible, and new technology from North America also dictated a change from rail to road logging. Neil Gibson, the engineer in charge of war-time logging operations and the railway survey into the Florentine, committed suicide. He was replaced by Dan Kitchener his 2IC, a young energetic Victorian who favoured

⁵⁵op cit.

⁵⁶op cit.

⁵⁷Meyer, op cit.

⁵⁸Burns, Merv ANM/MP.

road-logging. Kitchener imported other specialists into the state, including the first trucking contractors. ANM gradually developed a network of roads for heavy trucks bringing the logs to the Marshalling Yards at the Maydena Depot to be off-loaded by crotch-rig onto trains for the Boyer Mill.

The Florentine Depot also housed its own saw-mills as ANM, under the terms of its Concession, were required to supply sawn timber and logs for the building industry. A sled or portable mill cut minor species in the bush, while sassafras was supplied for peg-making.⁵⁹

Company/Work-Force Relations

A Paternal-Cooperative Model

ANM's Melbourne based directors adopted a paternal approach to employee relationships, a pattern already established in Tasmania by Cadburys and the Electrolytic Zinc Co.⁶⁰ As the Boyer Mill was constructed, new suburbs dedicated to its workers were erected, first at New Norfolk in 1940, and then the new village of Maydena in 1948.

The interest in staff welfare was broad. In conjunction with industry unions, the company established its own medical and dental benefits scheme. Keith Murdoch had a strong interest in the arts and aesthetics; he was president of the trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria, and president of the Town & Country Planning Association.⁶¹ This interest continued at the new industrial development in Tasmania, as he brought the Head Gardener from the Melbourne Botanical Gardens to New Norfolk in 1941 to advise on landscaping the mill and the purpose-built suburb. The same principles were later applied to Maydena where avenues of European trees (now mature) line its streets and the former Depot.⁶²

Two Cultures in the Valley

In the formative phase before WWII, and during the conflict, ANM had relied heavily on the skills of the local community. Post-war, the Two Cultures configuration of the Company's work-force accelerated as ANM employed returning servicemen, plus interstate and international staff, particularly at a management level. In addition, the all-male work-force widened, with 'outsiders' who were sometimes 'foreign' workers. These included migrants from Europe, one of the first being a group of 12 Balts, mainly Lithuanians, who arrived in Australia on the first migrant ship in 1948.⁶³ They were followed by British, Czech, Polish and Italians, most single men. An exception was Serbian, 'Johnny'⁶⁴ Pavlovic, a carpenter and truck driver, who married

⁵⁹The Pioneer Peg Factory was eventually acquired fully by ANM, but closed in the late 60's due to competition from plastic and imported pegs.

⁶⁰see Alexander, Alison *A Heritage of Welfare & Caring - the EZ Community Council 1918-1991*, Hobart, 1991.

⁶¹Australian Encyclopaedia, Vol 6 p 188-9.

⁶²MacFie, Maydena op cit.

⁶³Tarvydas, Ramunas *From Amber Coast to Apple Isle, 50 Years of Baltic Immigrants in Tasmania, 1948-1998*, Hobart, 1997.

⁶⁴Many European male migrants were called 'Johnny' by their Australian work-mates, partly from xenophobia but also to prevent embarrassment to both parties from a mispronounced name.

a Tasmanian.⁶⁵ An unusual combination was Patrina Locher who arrived from London as bush nurse, accompanied by her Czech husband, Jan.⁶⁶

Maydena the Model Township

The Two Cultures was reflected in the contrasting architectural styles of the old sawmill and farming villages of the Tyenna Valley, and the new Company town. The old settlements of Fitzgerald and Junee were submerged in the 'New Town' of Maydena when construction started in 1948. The orderly, repetitive character of the Maydena homes, which were of six basic configurations, contrast to the (often tiny) individuality of the earlier sawmilling and settler's homes. The Company magazine, referred to Maydena as the 'Model Bush Settlement Township of the Commonwealth.'⁶⁷

Income levels rose dramatically as ANM offered unheard of wages. One new employee took his first pay packet back, thinking there must be some mistake. An employment 'mono-culture' developed, as traditional forms of employment such as the local hop-industry could not compete with the new wage levels.⁶⁸

The Prefabricated Town

After a few homes were built by locals, ANM contracted Payne Pty Ltd of Hobart to erect prefabricated houses at the new town. Jack Payne had worked with Hansen & Yuncken who built the Boyer Mill and a number of major Tasmanian buildings, including Wrest Point⁶⁹, and the T & G Building, Hobart, which was ANM's first Head Office. The 'pre-fab' homes and the school⁷⁰ were assembled in the Hobart suburb of Lenah Valley and brought in 'kit' form on semi-trailers to the new township of Maydena. Their erection was recalled by Jack Payne's twin brothers Stan and Reg.⁷¹

Public Amenities

Single men lived at Risby's Camp until a purpose-built housing complex called the Singlemen's Quarters was constructed by the Company at Maydena in 1956. In addition ANM funded the erection of other facilities including the Community Hall, Sports Ground and Swimming Pool. These facilities plus houses were maintained by a Company work-force.⁷²

⁶⁵Pavlovic, Johnny ANM/MP.

⁶⁶Locher, Patrina ANM/MP. Describing himself as 'a square peg in a round hole,' Jan Locher, studied part-time at the University of Tasmania, eventually joining the Education Department. (pers comm.)

⁶⁷Newsprint Log, Dec 1953, p18.

⁶⁸MacFie, Maydena op cit.

⁶⁹Later incorporated in the Hobart Wrest Point Casino.

⁷⁰Now the only such school extant in Tasmania.

⁷¹Payne, Stan and Reg ANM/MP.

⁷²By the time these were built Sir Keith Murdoch had died - in 1951 - and ANM's future was in other directors hands.

Division and Class in Bush and Town

The village was constructed with a hierarchy typical of mining towns, with the Logging Manager's house, surrounded by other senior managers located on 'Snob Hill', as the locals referred to it. In addition to having the biggest house the Logging Manager's residence was surrounded by an extensive garden with a variety of large trees. These homes overlooked the foremen (who lived in 'Foremen Street'), while both were physically above the bush hands, drivers etc. who lived below. Contract truck drivers lived in a separate street.

Fallers, however, wherever they lived in the village, were the new affluent elite, especially once the chain-saw arrived. Increased cutting rates allowed them to buy new cars each year and dress their spouses to reflect their new found wealth.⁷³

Socially, the men's private lives were an extension of their occupations as they congregated in the RSL Club in the same groups that worked together in the bush or Depot. Spouses also became friends from the same circles.⁷⁴

Maydena developed a double sense of identity; the first based around the original settlers and the bush traditions which grew from the bush craft, and the culture of the new arrivals, many tertiary educated. While the former were content to stay and live in the confines of the valley and its supportive ways, the latter had to 'get out' at regular intervals.⁷⁵

Some of the new arrivals -who were invariably appointed to management levels at Maydena- sensed their outside-ness, and identified they had come as 'colonisers' as in Africa or the Pacific islands.⁷⁶ Some, like Graeme Sargison (a New Zealander) & Patrina Locher, found the local Tyenna Valley dialect difficult to understand.⁷⁷

Logging Management

New Technology in the Bush

While the locals and newcomers adjusted to each other, new technological changes were introduced. Trucks and crawler tractors became heavier and more powerful. The crotch rig and heel boom loaders were superseded by the mobile Skagit loader, a four wheeled crane, imported from the USA.⁷⁸ The greatest impact on man and forest was the chainsaw. Reg Burns argued, 'The chainsaw murdered the bushmen,' as old skills learnt with the cross-cut saw and axe were dispensed with by a new generation of fast-working 'fallers'.⁷⁹ Independent-minded bushmen and fallers were initially reluctant to wear safety clothing including ear-muffs and hard-hats, insisted upon by ANM.

⁷³MacFie, Maydena, op cit.

⁷⁴Returned Servicemen's League.

⁷⁵MacFie, Maydena op cit.

⁷⁶Curly Humphries, pers. comm.; Kim Creak & Graeme Sargison, ANM/MP.

⁷⁷Locher, P., op cit., and Sargison, G. ANM/MP.

⁷⁸Noel Smith, ANM/MP.

⁷⁹Burns, Reg ANM/MP.

Regeneration

Following the research of Max Gilbert and Allan Cunningham into the life cycle of *Euc. regnans*, new ideas on regeneration were implemented by ANM.⁸⁰ An extensive system of roads were cut into the Concession, as the forests were logged then cut and winrowed for firing prior to re-seeding.⁸¹ Tasmania's Forestry Commission established as Research Station at Maydena, its foresters undertaking their own field work becoming a model for similar centres in Tasmania. A young Bill Mollison, assessed the impact of wildlife on seedlings, and suggested alternatives to the poisoning of game, including the processing of wild meat.⁸² The Company's foresters contributed to the discussion over forest management through professional papers.

The Maydena operation was regarded as being at the forefront of forestry research in Australia.⁸³ However, in the Concession, Company foresters and workers in the Silviculture section felt themselves the 'poor cousins' in terms of priorities given them.⁸⁴ The theory of regeneration viewed by foresters, and practices in the field were often different.⁸⁵

Maydena – the 'Best Place in Tassie'

Many former residents recall life in Maydena fondly, a close knit though hierarchical community, where doors and cars were never locked and children wandered the streets freely after school.⁸⁶ A job 'for the boy' - but rarely 'the girl' - was never in doubt at 'The Print'. Logging Manager Dan Kitchener was the unofficial 'Mayor of Maydena', deciding which staff were allocated company homes and who was to be promoted - or sacked. He was also responsible for entertaining VIP's sent to the Florentine by Kessell's replacement at Boyer, the flamboyant Royalist & New Norfolk resident, Rod Henry.

Maydena had over 50 clubs, but they were often headed by Dan Kitchener, as patron or president. Newcomers were often the most active club members, except in those based on physical strength. The Maydena Axemen's Carnival was dominated by fallers from ANM's work-force who had moved to Maydena attracted by high wages, and included seven world chopping champions, led by Doug Youd. Other clubs included football, cricket, badminton, car rallying and angling. The Maydena Players attracted the new-arrivals on-stage, but the Community Hall was packed by all for performances.

However, there were tensions underneath the affluent community. These included the dominant and damaging role of alcohol in the social life of many men, and a reckless regard for safety by others. This wasn't helped by the high injury rate typical of the industry of the time,

⁸⁰Gilbert, J. M. 'Eucalypt - Rainforest Relationships and the Regeneration of the Eucalypts', PhD thesis, Uni of Tasmania, 1958.

⁸¹Re-seeding changed from reliance on the natural shedding by mature seed trees on cleared forest, to hand-cast seeding & hand planted seedling and finally to aerial and automated sowing. Some hand sowing is still practised in 'blind' areas.

⁸²Done in conjunction with the CSIRO. See reports of Mollison held by the Forestry Commission, Hobart. Bill Mollison is today better known today for his *Permaculture* concept of sustainable agriculture.

⁸³John Hickey, ANM/MP.

⁸⁴Byron Gordon, Mike White, ANM/MP.

⁸⁵Byron Gordon ANM/MP.

⁸⁶Bob & Mavis Wickam, ANM/MP.

reflected in the deaths of 15 men over the 50 year history of the Concession, plus numerous severe injuries.

In a reversal of most rural towns, the young men stayed for the almost guaranteed employment while young girls left for Hobart. Many older women experienced new interests, though most were the spouses of 'outsiders'. Some women felt restricted from socialising freely, as their role and the reactions of other women was pre-determined by their husband's status within ANM. The CWA attracted both new and old community members.⁸⁷ The RSL Women's Auxiliary and women's groups in the Catholic and Anglican churches provided welfare for families in need.

Wind-Down and Closure

By the mid 1980's, ANM was part owned by Fletcher-Challenge, the New Zealand pulp giant. Well before the environmental debate, the Company gradually moved to reliance on regrowth instead of old-growth timber. With logs being trucked from other directions, and world newsprint over-supplied, the Company moved for the shutdown of its Maydena operation in 1991. When the closure came, many staff were unprepared. All former employees regret the loss of camaraderie and community.

The majority of former employees moved from the district to retire or find work; some stayed with ANM. Maydena (i.e. in 1999) comprises a mixed community of retired ANM employees, low-income families and a small number of families working in small businesses on contract to ANM/Fletcher Challenge. The former Singlemen's Quarters is an accommodation guest house and restaurant, catering for bush-walkers and tourists. A younger generation of bush workers is cutting minor species for builders and craftsman.

One of the last acts of ANM as an entity occurred in 1998 when the Concession was returned to the Tasmanian Government, 66 years after the first allocation in 1932.

Although the 'coloniser' had left Maydena the people and the valley had been changed forever.⁸⁸

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The tapes, transcripts and photographs from the Maydena Project will eventually be housed in the Archives Office of Tasmania.

The author wishes to thank ANM/Fletcher Challenge for defraying costs in attending the 1999 Gympie Forest History Conference.

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⁸⁷Country Women's Association.

⁸⁸MacFie, Maydena, op cit.

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