

Mundaring Weir.
8th February, 1966.

Conservator of Forests,
PERTH.

Somerville Plantation Fire - Feb. 6th 1966.

At 3;30 p.m. on Sunday, 6th February, 2 separate smokes were reported by the Somerville towerman, their position being given as Compartment 51.

The Somerville gang and Forest Ranger Bukelis left H.Q. immediately, and on arrival at the fire, found two separate fires lit about 2 chains apart in Compartment 49. The fires were attacked at 3;40 p.m. but the small force of four men were unable to control the fire. More assistance arrived at 4:00 p.m. when 3 firemen from the Melville Fire Station reached the fire, and S.F.C.F. Ashcroft arrived at about the same time. Assistant Forester O'Grady + 3 arrived at 4;30 p.m., and with the combined efforts of all forces then in attendance, assisted to some degree by a "drawing together" of the two initial fires, the running fire was stopped at approximately 4;50 p.m.

A moderate South-west wind was blowing, and caused a North Easterly movement of the head fire, together with a number of spot fires at distances up to 4 chains down wind.

A further hop-over occurred in Compt. 46 approximately 13 chains from the headfire, and this was suppressed by the timely arrival of the Wanneroo heavy-duty at 5:05 p.m.

Outside Assistance.

Divisional Headquarters at Wanneroo, Mundaring and Gleneagle were notified by Somerville tower and all centres despatched a gang and pumper unit. Arrival times of these units at the fire were as follows:

Wanneroo (ADFO + 2 + pumper)	4:50 p.m.
Gnangara (F/Guard + 2)	5:05 p.m.
Mundaring (O/S + 4 + pumper)	5.30 p.m.
Gleneagle (O/S + 3 + pumper)	5.30 p.m.
Fire Brigade Landrover + 3 (Perth)	5.45 p.m.
Soltoggios Cat 669 Scoop	4.20 p.m.

Officers.

S.F.C.F. Ashcroft arrived at	4.05 p.m.
A.D.F.O. Keene arrived at	4.50 p.m.
D.F.O. van Noort, D.F.O. HEwett	5.00 p.m.
Supt. J.C. Meacham	5.00 p.m.
F/Gh Quicke	5.05 p.m.

The rubber tyred Cat 669 Scoop was employed on cleaning up the 1½ chain grid of access tracks around the North-West flank, and after deploying the Wanneroo and Gleneagle gangs to watch for spot fires in Compts. 46, 47 and 48, all other personnel were engaged in suppression of this N-West flank.

Mopping up commenced at 6 p.m. and the main gangs left the fire at 7.45 p.m.

The fire was about ¾ acre in extent when the Somerville gang arrived at the fire, and the final size of the fire is 3 acres. The estimated loadage is 40 loads marketable pine per acre on a total volume of approximately 120 loads.

Costs.

Detailed costs will not be available for a couple of weeks but the approximate suppression costs have been estimated as follows:-

a) Firefighting man hours 114 @ \$1.50 per hour	=	\$171.00
b) 490 miles vehicles @ 12c/mile	=	58.80
c) Somerville gang 16 hours	=	16.00
" vehicles 46 miles	=	69.00
d) Sottoggio Scoop 2 hours	=	48.00
		<u>\$362.80</u>

Say. \$370.00

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. I believe that the O.I.C. and men from Somerville and Collier are to be congratulated on a good effort. This is one of the few pine fires which, while burning in heavy thinnings slash has been suppressed within the compartment.
2. There may be some significance in the fact that our previous big fire at Somerville was lit exactly 1 year ago (Sunday 7th Feb. 1965) only 2 compartments away.
3. The action of two fires drawing together modified fire intensity at the head, and assisted suppression of the headfire. This feature has been noticed before, especially in the Compt. 14 fire.
4. The routine instructions for the towerman functioned effectively, but the following suggestions may improve the system.
 - (a) Manning of Como HQ as dispatcher is slow when the duty officer lives away from the job, and the VHF set in Como office is often unreadable at Somerville. The dispatcher situation cannot readily be altered but an improved VHF system e.g. at the Research Centre may be much more effective.

- (b) If the VHF set in Somerville tower could transmit on Channel 1, he would be able to contact Dale Tower direct, and leave Dale to despatch aid from Mundaring and Glen-eagle.
- (c) Assuming that Ranger Bukelis and Sen. Forester Ashcroft will normally be the first officers at the fire and will be fully occupied with the actual suppression, the next officer to arrive should be detailed to remain in continuous radio contact from a 4 x 4 vehicle to provide a certain line of communication at the fire itself. Immediately this officer mans his "control point" he should notify his name, and a familiar call sign (I suggest Mr. Ashcroft's call sign "YOKE GEORGE", which is familiar to all Northern Division personnel) to Somerville tower and all mobiles. This should facilitate guiding incoming gangs to the fire and minimize the time wasted calling mobiles which are not attended.
- (d) Plant Inspector Reynolds arrived at the fire by about 6 p.m. and valuable assistance with some faults in heavy duty pumper units. This should become a standard practice if possible.
- (e) Superintendent Meachem should be contacted at an early stage since he can be at Somerville within the vital first ten minutes for any fire that occurs outside normal working hours.
- (f) The new design pumpers from Wanneroo have proved to be superior unit in sandy conditions and allowance on the 1966-67 estimates should be made for one of these units at both Collier and Somerville.

P.N. HEWETT.

D.F.O.

SOMERVILLE PLANTATION FIRE - 6TH FEB. 1966.

Weather data taken at the Perth Met. Bureau was obtained for 6th February and is given below:-

	Temp.F ^o	RH%.	D.P.	Wind Direction.	Wind Strength (Knots)
0900	81	55	63	W.N.W.	2
1200	82.8	49	62	W	5
1500	78.9	66	67	W.S.W.	6
● 1800	72.1	76	64	S.W.	12

Compartment 49 in which this fire occurred was planted in 1926 (Leira).

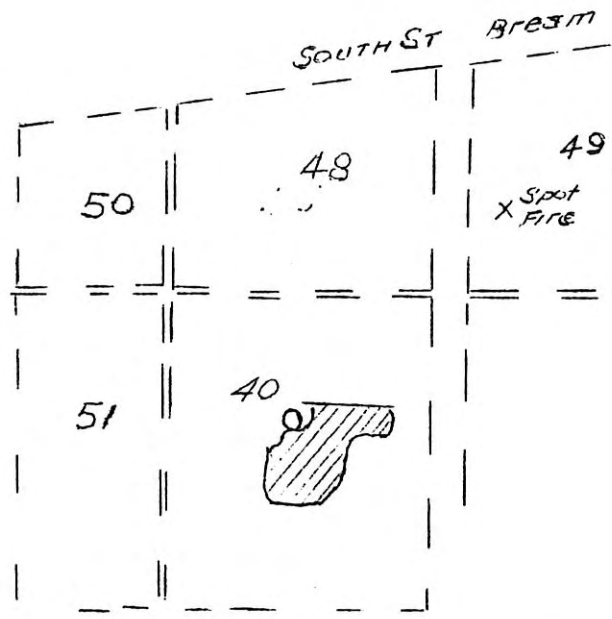
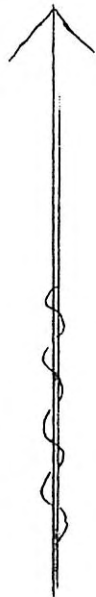
Site Quality 1.

Twice thinned. Most recent thinning was approximately five years ago.

Stocking of 280 trees per acre - 100 sq.ft. Basal area.

Height of 60 ft.

It is estimated that ground fuel would approximate 12-15 tons per acre.



Scale 10 fts. = 1 inch

Somerville Fire
6/2/66