

PINE TREES STEEPED IN HISTORY

By ALAN WILLS

THE recent felling of five pines at SOHQ to make room for proposed extensions to the Como Research Building aroused interest among research staff about the origins and early history of the Collier Pine Plantation.

Planting the area with pines was first proposed by the Conservator of Forests in July 1924.

Clearing for the nursery began in February 1925 on the edge of the swamp behind what is now the South Perth rubbish transfer facility.

Sowing the nursery and construction of accommodation for the assistant forester in charge were completed that year.

The first plantings were in July 1926 about where the Department of Agriculture is sited.

Planting continued annually until 1937 when the last pines were planted in what is now the south-western corner of Curtin campus.

By 1937 about 400ha of pines had been planted.

During the early 1930s, while Australia was succumbing to the postwar Depression, unemployed workers planted the pines under the direction of experienced Forests Department personnel.

The seed for the plantings were derived from Portuguese and French strains of the Maritime pine, *Pinus pinaster*.

The pines recently felled near the Research Building were *Leiria*, a Portuguese strain planted in 1929.

The growth rings of these trees indicate the problems faced by pines growing on poor sandy soils.

The trees were planted very densely by today's standards at about 1000 trees per acre.

Thinning in 1947-48 and 1956 had no noticeable effect on growth ring size, a testament to the intense competition for resources.

Subsequent to clearing for the Research Building

site in 1965, and later establishment of lawns and reticulation, the growth ring size increased dramatically.

This growth increase was such that the trees produced about eight times the amount of wood in their last 22 years compared to their first 36.

In this light, it is somewhat ironic that the trees derived great benefit from the earlier building programme, yet met their destruction for a building programme now shelved.

When considering present developments in the lands once constituting the Collier Pine Plantation it is useful to also consider attitudes to the plantation at the time of its planting.

An article from *The West Australian*, on October 8, 1931, said that "the area at South Perth would have a very special interest and value in future years as a suburban pine forest which may rival Kings Park as one of the attractions of the metropolitan area."

While the area has not become an idyllic parkland, the plantation holds manifold value for the area, with its principal value derived from the many public facilities it now contains.

No less important is the relief it provides from the surrounding high density residential suburbs.

Their expertise is in great demand by farmers, particularly in tree planting, direct seeding and regeneration for soil conservation.

"The Esperance Tree Book" is available at CALM and Agriculture Department offices at Esperance, and from Como, at \$4 a copy.



FROM SOUTH PERTH

portals also at Windjana and Tunnel Creek.

Tourists have also been prolific here this season.

With the busy season over, it's time for these rangers who have been working so hard to take well earned holidays, and we hope all enjoy their time off.

...k 'a ...case'

visory officers based at Como, Narrogin, Geraldton and Manjimup, and other officers who handle extension enquiries part-time at many district and regional offices and nurseries.

