



PIONEERS: A Profile

It was 1919, and early spring in the karri country - a time when the forest drips with misty rain, and the dank scent of wattle and bossiaea mingles with the ever-present smoke from wood stoves and sawdust piles. Wood was the mainstay then - the "never-ending" source of most trade and employment in the south-west. Ex-servicemen queued at scattered mill offices around the south wanting work, and getting it. Manjimup, although quite small, was the centre of the timber trade in this region, and was

sited at the junction of several rail lines from places like Deanmill and Jardee and Pemberton further to the south. On one side of the main street was the railway station from where the felled giants lurched off down the track in hundreds of sawn sections to the capital and the ports. Opposite was the hotel where other felled "giants" lurched through swing doors after too much beer and too many days in the bush, or the war that had ended the year before - or both.

The Training of Foresters

by

C. E. Lane-Poole

first Conservator of Forests.

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... In every one of the States of Australia there is a vast quantity of work to be accomplished in repairing the damage done by generations of exploitation and in protecting and extending the forested areas so that they shall remain permanent assets. But without men who have had some special training for the work, it is useless to entertain hopes for the accomplishment of the task. So necessary is this training that in every State arrangements have either been made or are in progress for imparting the necessary knowledge to those who may enter a forest school as apprentices, with a view of reaching higher grades. Forestry as a life calling for youth offers many attractions. Almost the whole of the work is in the open air and under conditions eminently suited to physical and mental health...

The course of instruction for apprentices at the school will extend over a period of four years and the following outline furnishes some idea of the scope and nature of the training:-

First Year - The successful applicants will proceed to the Forest School for Apprentices.

Subjects for the first year:-

1. Elementary mathematics.
2. Geology and Physiography.
3. Botany (elementary).
4. Entomology.

While engaged in practical work in the field printed lectures will be forwarded to the apprentices fortnightly in the subjects set out for each year.

Second Year - In the second year the apprentices will return to the school for two months' training.

On returning to practical work in the bush, the boys will be placed, as far as possible, in localities where they will receive training in nursery and plantation work.

The subjects to be studied during the second year are:-

1. Soils.
2. Botany - systematic and economic.
3. Surveying.
4. Forestry - History and Value.

Third Year - In March of the third year the apprentices will return to the school for a further two months' instruction.

On returning to the bush the apprentices will, where possible, be employed in classification and working plan survey work.

Subjects for third year:-

1. Sylviculture (including nursery work).
2. Mensuration.
3. Valuation.
4. Protection.

During the fourth year the apprentice will be attached to a district in order to learn, under the District Forest Officer, the whole of the routine work, including clerical work, general work and timber inspection. He will be required to submit independent reports on matters receiving consideration in the district. Opportunities will be given for visiting various mills and wood-working industries and provision made for continuous employment in at least one sawmill.

Subjects for fourth year:-

1. Forest Management and Working Plans.
2. Utilization.
3. Transport and forest engineering.
4. Forest Policy.

Rate of Pay - Subject to an apprentice passing the necessary examination, the following rates of pay will apply:-

First Year	12s. 6d. plus 18s. subsistence allowance per week.
Second Year	17s. 6d. plus 18s. subsistence allowance per week.
Third Year	22s. 6d. plus 18s. subsistence allowance per week.
Fourth Year	30s. 0d. plus 18s. subsistence allowance per week.



The five original apprentices at the Ludlow Forestry School, were, from left to right, D.H. Perry, W.A. Ross, C.V. Kinsella, J.A. Thomson and H.G. Clover. The Forests Department continues to train cadets for employment as Forest Guards.

The last goods train to Pemberton steamed its way out of Manjimup and into the surrounding forest. Several men sat awkwardly in an open truck near the front of the train, hunched up with the swags, portmanteaux and camping gear of the team who would be working in the forest of the Dombakup Brook and the Shannon and Gardner basins. They weren't loggers, but foresters, and would be camping for eight months in the uncut karri classifying the quantity and quality of timber in the region to the south and east of Pemberton. There was no European settlement in the country due south of Pemberton then, except the Moon family on the Dombakup and, of course, the Brockmans on the Warren nearer to the town, who had been driving cattle to the coast every summer for years.

"Watch it Dick!", someone shouted, and the young man jumped out of his reverie to dive at the nearest swag. It had caught light from the rain of red-hot charcoal spurting out from the engine as it steamed uphill. Even their clothes would catch alight, but there was nothing else for it - the long walk out to the Dombakup started tomorrow early. Dick settled back in his place, back to the engine, hat pulled down, flannel shirt covered by a heavy jersey, and boots and dungarees protecting his feet and legs from the cold and the ash.

Dick Perry, the youngest member of the team, was seventeen at the time, had been in Australia seven years and was the eldest of four children. His father had been the head coachman on a large estate in the south of

England. Horses were his father's entire life, and when the motor car was introduced to the estate by his Lordship, he had declined the offer to become chief mechanic and driver, electing instead to try his luck in Australia working still with the beloved horses. Out in Western Australia his son Humphrey, later called "Dick" in this land of nick-names, was popular, even as a "poor little Pommie boy", was sprightly of mind and build, and quite determined. He would be a farmer he told his parents, when he left primary school at fourteen. But when the advertisement for apprentices with the Department for Woods and Forests appeared in the paper, his parents urged him to apply.

Security they said, was very important and in 1917 with so many people looking for work, the

opportunity for a paid apprenticeship was too good to miss. Out of 60 or 70 lads Jack Thomson and Dick Perry were chosen by C.E. Lane-Poole, later to become the first Conservator of Forests. They could ride well and knew how to care for horses, and these skills they were soon to discover, were vital...

The train jerked around a corner, and Dick glanced up at the looming karri, overwhelmed by his first view of some of the tallest trees on Earth. The sun had come out and filtered through the glistening leaves down through the dense, pungent understorey and onto the rich red loam of the forest floor. He was very observant, training himself to see many parts of the living forest in all its detail, committing it to memory. In the jarrah forest of the Sunkland he had done this, chain by chain, acre by acre, mile by mile, observing the world around him, noting the condition of the resource, judging

the real amount of timber along this area near the Blackwood River. He had spent most of 1919 in the camps along the Blackwood, his first assignment in the bush.

It had been exciting alright. Forester Gordon Parkes had met him at the Ship Inne at Busselton, and they had ridden all that day down the Jalbarragup Road to the river, only to discover that the rest of the team had moved on. So they camped the night then and there, wrapped in grey wool army-issue blankets, with only a fire and a morsel of food between them. And then late in the night the howling had started, and eyes ringed the dying fire, and young Dick woke up alarmed.

"Don't worry, Dick", Gordon had said, "just dingoes. They'll do you no harm".

They were good days in the bush then, those days in the Sunkland. There was no dieback, and much of the forest hadn't yet been exploited.

Lane-Poole was fighting to get control of all the timber cutting both here and in the north. The twenty-five-year long concessions of large tracts of forest to the timber companies were unregulated, and had to be changed. The extent of the jarrah forest was actually unknown, despite the exaggerated estimates of the timber harvesters. That we'd never run out of jarrah was the common belief, and the wastage of fine timber enormous.

The Blackwood River, even twenty miles from the mouth was fresh then, drinkable, and teeming with life, providing a diet of fresh marron to the foresters. Evidence of aboriginal occupation of the area was still easily seen, and like them, the men of the classification camps hunted the abundant game in the area. Kangaroos were a source of fresh meat for the camp, relieving the poor diet of salt beef and pork brought in from the

The timber industry was very labour intensive, providing employment for returned servicemen after the first World War. Note the size of this huge karri log.



nearest town every week. The eight-man team was working through the Sunland forest for most of the year, then was transferred south to karri country.

Dick worked in the deep south for the next eight months, into autumn of 1920. Many incidents coloured the team's progress, and the work was slow, because, unlike the jarrah forest, the karri was difficult to penetrate. Carts would bog down or even tip over, streams and rivers would have to be crossed and re-crossed by swimming and wading, vital provisions such as sugar and tobacco would be unavailable from Pemberton, and even the cook "disappeared" one day, 50 miles out of Pemberton. An excellent cook but an alcoholic like others who had returned from the war, he was discovered later back at the hotel. But the work did progress, forming in Dick Perry's mind a respect and love for the living forest, and his work in it. His first years of forestry were the first years of the new Forests Department established in 1919. During these years Lane-Poole was to resign in protest at the extension of the old give-away timber concessions which were virtually exempt from the provisions of the new Forests Act. This stimulated a Royal Commission of Enquiry into forestry in Western Australia. Along with other apprentices young Dick was trained in all aspects of practical forestry, but most importantly, he was taught how to plant and grow trees. Other people would be cutting them down, but he would be planting them.

... "Senhor Perry, this way", said Senhor Amoral, hurrying his way through the narrow streets of the beautiful medieval town of Leiria in Portugal. It was 1965, and Dick Perry, now 63 years old, was very much involved with growing trees. He followed the Portuguese forester who was in charge of the forest of Leiria. Dick and his wife, Katharine, had been in Portugal for two years. This was their last spring in this country.



The first Forests Department head office picnic was held at Point Walter, Perth in 1922. Dick Perry is in the back row at the left, and the young, second Conservator, Mr. S. L. Kessell is seated on the ground, third from the right.



A young Dick Perry does the washing at the forestry topographical survey camp near Mundaring Weir in 1923. Throughout the many years of his career he camped in this manner until horses were superseded by motor vehicles. Note the bush pole construction of the tents, the sawn-off blackboy used as a table, and the sturdy basin stand.

"Manuel, he is in here, the prison", said Snr Amoral, as they rounded the white-washed stone wall of the gaol. The two foresters entered the gateway and the iron doors were immediately clanged shut behind them. The warden rose to meet them, then Snr Amoral began the long process of persuasion to get Manuel out of prison, for this young peasant boy was vital to the Perrys' work in the *Pinus pinaster* forest of Leiria. This boy was one of the last people in Portugal to have been taught the traditional way of climbing the towering, straight pine trees. With just a single rope looped around his feet in a figure of eight, the lad would almost run up the trunk reaching the top of the tree a hundred feet from the ground in less than half the time that Dick

would take using the cumbersome climbing ladders and irons. Even at 63, Dick Perry was fit enough to climb up to a dozen trees a day, but this was not enough. The Perrys were coming to the end of their collecting programme and still had many seeds and scions to collect. No-one else could climb trees like Manuel, and without his help and ability they would never have gathered the buds for grafting, cones for seed and pollen of 85 trees, that finally reached Australia. The Perrys would walk miles through this huge forest in search of the particular trees that would provide perfect breeding stock for the tree-breeding programme being conducted at home in the nursery at Wanneroo. Dick and Kath would establish their bearings, and march off down

through the maze of trunks on the watch for the perfect tree, in genetic terms, the "plus phenotype". Out of every quarter of million trees that they looked at only one was good enough to provide the grafts for future pine plantations in Western Australia. Furthermore, they could only collect the growing tips in spring, so Manuel's immediate help was essential.

"Yes, we may take him, Senhor Perry", said Snr Amoral eventually, after painstakingly explaining to the warden the importance of Manuel to the international project now in hand. "But you are charged with the responsibility of picking him up from the gaol and bringing him back every night".

The Portuguese have used maritime or pinaster pine in ship building for centuries. Here the villagers haul the longboat in after a fishing expedition. The hull and oars are all made of pinaster.



The next day Dick and Kath drove to the prison in their Volkswagen, with the packed lunch of cheese, bread, wine and fruit, prepared for them by the three girls at the boarding house in Marinha Grande where they were staying. Marinha Grande and many of the other towns and villages that they had seen, was high-walled and colourful, and under the Mediterranean sunshine shone like a new pin. They drove out of this village and into the narrow streets of nearby Leiria, passing the neat stone houses with gay geraniums peeping out from flower pots and window boxes. Like the ancient forest, everything in the town of Leiria was very neat and clean and ordered - the pavements swept, the centuries-old fountains flowing cleanly. Centuries of civilization had developed in the Portuguese a respect for all aspects of their culture, both man-made and natural. Forests there were far from their wild state, yet so well-managed and cared for by every one, that the supply of wood was assured. All products of the forest were used in sensible amounts, and exploited in their correct order. Resin for example was collected from the base of the biggest and healthiest trees three years before they were felled. Firewood was collected methodically by villagers whose ancestors 600 years before had been granted the right by King Dennis to collect the dead or pruned branches or other fallen debris. And in time the final crop of mature trees would be cut to supply the Portuguese with the timber that made their fishing vessels, their housing frames, their furniture. The areas of forest harvested would be sown again by broadcast seeding. Although this traditional method of seeding was slow, the forest re-grew, and a continuing yield of wood was provided.

At the prison gates Manuel appeared wearing the old cloth trousers and thread-bare shirt that the Perrys had noticed the spring before. The shirt fitted snugly and was to become more ragged over the ensuing weeks during the intensive climbing programme. If Kath hadn't made the boy a tough canvas vest he would eventually have been sliding down the rough pinaster bark on his bare skin.

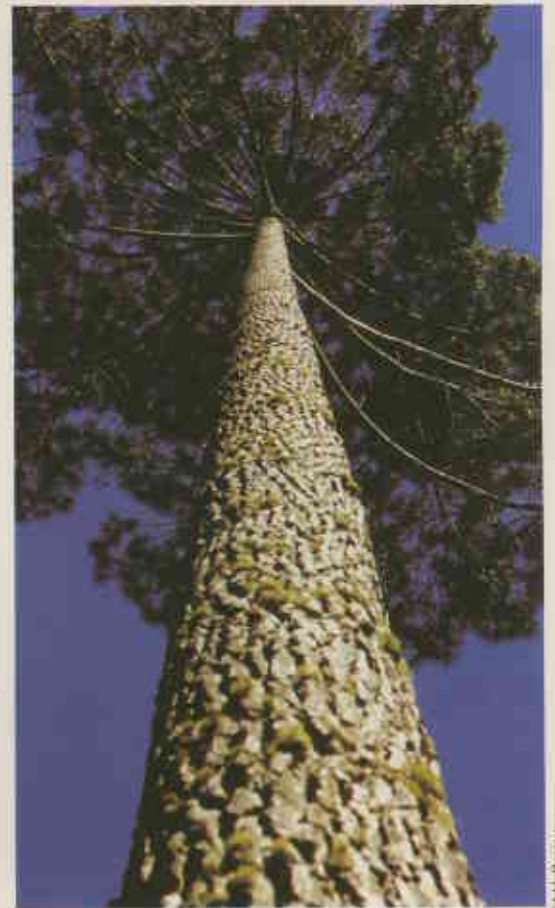


Dick and Manuel in the *Pinus pinaster* forest of Leiria sort through the growing tips, or scions, collected by Manuel from the top of the towering pine trees.



Kath Perry assisted in finding, measuring and marking the "plus phenotype" trees in Leiria. Only one in every 250 000 that the Perrys looked at was good enough to provide stock for Western Australia.

A *Pinus pinaster* "plus phenotype" showing its straight trunk and evenly branching canopy.





After his retirement in 1967, Dick Perry became more actively interested in termites, and his study took him into the arid regions of Western Australia. Always at home in the bush, he is pictured here waiting for the billy to boil.

Employed in 1917 Mr Dick Perry worked for fifty years in the Forests Department through the formative years of forestry in Western Australia.

The programme was winding up and the Perrys worked hard to record all field data and package the samples for air freighting out of Lisbon. Of all the forest services in Australia and New Zealand that were sent the scions, only the Western Australian Forests Department had success at grafting and propagating the Portuguese stock. Dick Perry is an old man now and one of his greatest pleasures is to visit the plantations north of Perth at Gnangara and Yanchep and observe the beautiful straight, sometimes perfect form of the trees growing there. He selected the parents of them all.

In 1983, you may see Dick Perry, healthy and busy. He may be cycling around Rottnest Island observing the reclamation of the sand dunes, or collecting firewood from the forest in his utility, or setting out in the brand new car for a trip in the country. Or there'll be a knock at the door of his Perth home, and someone will arrive with a bucket of termites for Dick to identify. Over the years, Dick Perry has become one of Western Australia's leading authorities on termites, has collaborated in the writing of a book on these interesting insects, and advises on their habits and characteristics. You may even find him, the boy whose formal education stopped two years short of the junior certificate, bent over his



H. Bradbury

microscope in his study, surrounded by books - on entomology, poetry, forestry, botany, history, genetics, and so on. The diaries of Ernest Giles and John Forrest, pioneers and explorers, are near one end. He and Kath, Dick casually mentions, recently followed part of the actual route taken by Giles in his attempt to cross Australia. Dick describes the thrill of following the explorer, of finding one of the party's cairns. His animated, expansive and often humorous conversation flows on, exploring many subjects, touched with the wisdom of 80 years of learning.

"But remember, I'm nothing special," he says. "We're all pioneers still in Western Australia you know".

Helen Bradbury

