

INSTITUTE GOLDFIELDS TRIP - JUNE 1972

I. TREES AND FORESTS

by

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To most I.F.A. members the goldfields holds a fascination arising from its remarkable woodland, its colourful history and its undoubted "place apart" reputation. Most have travelled through it en route to the eastern states, and many have made private visits; - but the opportunity to be shown inland forest activity and have described the various vegetational types by skilled people was too good to be missed for the 16 I.F.A. members who made the trip there during the long weekend June 3-5.

The programme was smoothly planned and executed by Peter Richmond and his assistants Bill Brennan and Norm Capoun. There were visits to the various types of eucalypt woodland, the more arid mulga type, sandalwood areas and the Kalgoorlie arboretum.

Most impressive was the eucalypt woodland in its various forms growing up to 70 feet in height in an eight inch annual rainfall. That it is capable of utilization and management in the traditional forestry sense is demonstrated by the 80-year old regrowth stands surrounding the city of Kalgoorlie. These now comprise the "green belt" jealously preserved by the townsfolk. There seems little doubt that its utilization for mining purposes can proceed indefinitely without fear of ecological deterioration. Despite a record four years drought vigorous eucalypt regeneration was evident in areas denuded by recent road and rail clearing.

Apart from local utilization the woodland has been useful to mankind in providing exotics adaptable to arid climates elsewhere. The demand for tree seeds remains constant both for production and amenity type planting. Some species (e.g. *E. crucis*, *E. Brockwayi*) are of limited occurrence, whereas others (*E. Salmophloia*, *E. salubris*) occur over hundreds of miles. Opinion among members favoured protection of the limited seed source of the former and a wide genetic base of the latter by A class reserves for this sole purpose. The original occurrence of *E. crucis* could be wiped out in minutes by an unknowing bulldozer driver clearing a track.

Concern was felt particularly for sandalwood, which is still pulled in quantity over an ever widening expanse of country. Though its value is considerable, its management as renewable resource appears to be out of the question due to slow growth. The present girth limit (3" D.O.B.) is utilization rather than conservation oriented and is considered to be insufficient safeguard for its future survival. Prudent conservation requires that more generous areas be reserved unpulled as an example of the ecosystem in which it occurs.

A proposal to establish further arboreta on the lines of that at Kalgoorlie is supported. The suggested locations at Coolgardie and Norseman have the advantage of visibility to the travelling public. Some provenance testing of the more widely occurring species could be included perhaps with benefit.

Worthy of note are examples of amenity and ornamental plantings of indigenous trees in townships and around homesteads:- e.g. the *E. salubris* street trees at Menzies, the wide variety of species in parks and streets of Kalgoorlie, the drought defiant green of the kurrajongs transported mature and fully grown from woodland to street at Kambalda, and the astounding Tuart (*E. gomphocephala*) growing at Kookynie!