

The Nostalgic Naturalist

by Old Timer

Took a trip down to Albany to see my sister last week. On the way, I thought I'd go and see a mate of mine who grows spuds in Manjimup. In his younger days, he was a timber feller at a place called the Shannon.

'Reckon you should go out and have a look at the joint,' he suggested as we sat on the verandah with our early morning cuppa.

'Get on, it turned up its toes years ago, nothing to be seen but the old golf course.'

'Nah, I'm serious. You should see what they've done with it. Barbeques, camping spots. Besides, you look like you could use some exercise. A quick trip around the walktrail would do you good, ya city slacker.'

'Hah, I spend more time in the bush than you do.'

George knows me. I like to do a bit of exploring off by myself. So I packed some lunch, told him I'd be back at five for tea, and left him to his beloved spuds.

Must say I was surprised. They certainly had spruced the place up. Walktrails, shelters, even a quokka lookout, for heaven's sake. Though I must say anyone who spots a quokka in broad daylight round here is a better man than me.

The rocks walktrail was great. I sat up on the top rock awhile, thinking. Some places in the bush just seem really powerful. On the way out, I went and had a quick squiz at the notice boards. Mokare's Rock was the name of the place I'd been sitting.

There's nothing like small, freshly dug potatoes, and George and I had a fine feed of them that evening then retired to the verandah with our cuppas.

'Hate to say it, mate, but you were right about the Shannon.'

George just grinned.

'Who was Mokare, by the way?'

'Mokare?'

'Yeah, the big rock, it's called Mokare's Rock.'

He shrugged. 'Damned if I know.'

I set off early next morning, with a sack of spuds in the back of my ute. When I arrived I had a bit of time to kill before my sister got home from work, so I headed for the library.

'Gudday, I'm chasing a bit information about somebody called Mokare. Think he might have been one of

those early French explorers. There's a rock named after him up Shannon way.'

'I haven't heard of him, but your best bet would be to contact the Albany Historical Society. They would be sure to have some information.'

She was right. They did. Sure looked at me a bit strange when I asked if they had the gen on the early French explorer, Mokare.

Turns out he was an Aborigine. Boy did I feel like three kinds of a fool. They gave me some sheets of information which I took back to my sister's place and read.

'Bet you don't know who's buried under the Albany Town Hall', I challenged my sister that evening, still feeling a bit miffed by my own ignorance.

She fixed me with her long-suffering Oh-lord-here-he-goes-again look and said 'Who? The cat's mother?'

'Mokare, that's who.'

'Who's he when he's at home?'

'Esteemed colleague of one Dr Alexander Collie, surgeon to the colonies.' I said with a plum in my mouth.



My sister raised one eyebrow, a trick I could never master.

'Mokare was from one of the local tribes, he acted as Collie's interpreter, and they ended up good mates. So good, in fact, that Collie asked to be

buried next to Mokare, at a place that later became the site for the town hall. Four years later John Septimus Roe dug Collie up and moved him to the Albany cemetery. He, of course, has a monument to his contributions to the colony. Mokare, it seems, moulders unremembered.'

'Funny the things you find out about your town, after you've been here for years,' my sister mused. 'Seems a pity, really. So much history unknown.'

'Yeah, it's a good thing I took that walk up the Shannon, or neither of us would have known, eh?'

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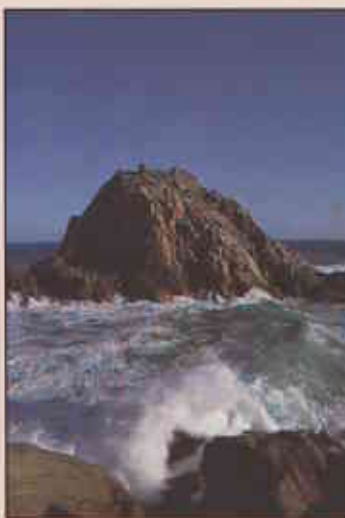
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EDITORIAL

The economic development versus environmental protection debate is a constant feature of our society today. No-one will disagree that our environment needs protection; there is also no doubt that Australia must improve its economic performance if we are to maintain our living standards and enjoy the natural environment which we are blessed with. This *Landscape* describes a project which combines environmental and economic advantages.

Australia's import bill for forest products is \$1.7 billion. Of this a considerable portion is paper which is made from eucalypt fibre. A Perth scientist was the first person to demonstrate that eucalypt could be made into paper, yet it is other countries that have capitalised on this discovery. For example, Brazil, Portugal, Chile, South Africa and Spain have established over 3 million hectares of highly productive eucalyptus plantations. Australia, home of the genus *Eucalyptus*, has only 40 000 hectares of eucalyptus plantations.

Despite our late start, there is no reason why W.A. cannot share some of the rewards which would come from capitalizing on the increasing world demand for high quality paper. We have the land and climate to grow the trees and the skills to do it competitively.

Widespread afforestation of the south-west is also an essential prerequisite to ameliorating salination and eutrophication of our waterways. It is unlikely that afforestation of the magnitude required could be achieved unless it is commercially driven. The production of trees for paper could provide the opportunity to carry out the afforestation program necessary for improving the environment at no cost to the State.

It would be ironic if the world demand for the much maligned woodchip provided the solution for what would arguably be two of the most serious environmental problems in south-western Australia.

Cover Photo

Trees loom out of the mist at Amelup near the Stirling Ranges.
Photograph by Robert Karri-Davies.