

DRIFTING TREES

In the March 1961 issue of this Bulletin, the recovery of samples of wood from a giant tree washed ashore at North Point, east of Albany, was reported. We failed to record, however, that at the same time Inspector J. Traynor noticed a separate log on the rocks a few yards away. This log, he said, appeared to have been there for a very long time but he took a sample of it in case it might be of interest. The sample of the log along with those taken from the tree were forwarded to Professor H.N. Barber, of the Botany Department of the School of General Studies in the Australian National University, Canberra.

Advice has now been received from Professor Barber that the samples have been identified by Mr. H.D. Ingle, of the Division of Forest Products, C.S.I.R.O. It transpires that the large tree was a member of the family of legumes and belonged to the genus Albizzia or Serianthes. He said that this group of trees was common throughout the tropics and had also been widely planted, so it was not possible to ascertain its point of origin. According to Mr. R.D. Royce, Officer-in-Charge, Botanical Branch, Department of Agriculture, three species of Albizzia have been reported in this State but none of them are believed to grow to the size of the Albany tree. The genus Albizzia is in the same great family group as wattles. Samples of the tree were found to contain marine borers but, although they were being examined by the Zoology Department of the University of W.A., it seems that they will not assist in pinpointing the tree's place of origin.

Professor Barber went on to say, however, that the sample from the log proved to be much more interesting than that from the tree. It was identified by Mr. Ingle as being definitely a South American beech of the genus Nothofagus. Professor Barber advised that similar wood had been sent to him from Tasmania, Macquarie Island, Tristan de Cunha and South Georgia. He added that the Albany specimen, therefore, fitted in nicely with the known drift pattern.

Professor Barber would be interested to receive additional samples and details of any further trees which might be washed up along our shores.