

This article was written in 2004, and published on the Victoria's Forestry Heritage website in September 2018

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## Introduction

I have assembled these notes in the hope that they might usefully sketch events at the Victorian School of Forestry in the 1970s, and some of my contributions.

Those who have enjoyed the privileges of a place and time are bound to be selective when they sift through memories some 30 years on, and for that there can be no apology. One can only hope not to distort an account through omissions.

The School was able to achieve well what it was meant to do largely owing to staunch support by the Forests Commission and the Board of Forestry Education, and to the high morale and energy of the staff and students. Great credit must go to the overworked resident forestry staff who gave such loyal service to the Diploma course and other activities throughout those years. We worked preposterous hours.

## Return to the School

Late in 1968 the Principal of the Victorian School of Forestry was about to retire and the position was advertised. We were living in Melbourne. Our son had just been offered a scholarship to a school in Melbourne and a boarding scholarship to a school in Ballarat. Our daughter, two years' younger, was happy at the Deepdene State primary school.

My tour of duty of two years was about to expire. There was no position in head office or in the field about to become vacant for which to apply. There was no way I could elect to stay in head office. My application for the Principal's job was expected.

There was a wait of more than six weeks after the closing date for applications before there were interviews. The panel comprised the three Commissioners, at least one member of the Board of Forestry Education, and one or two others. The time set for my interview one morning came and went. After six weeks, a delay of three hours or so that morning, during which a more senior candidate was recalled for further interview, was a bit rich. I left the office none the wiser.

That evening, the phone in our maisonette rang and it was the former Principal who had let it drop to the woman in Creswick in 1954 that I was about to teach at the School. I knew he was going to tell me I had the job, because he always liked to be the bearer of good tidings. He even gave me the pleasure of hearing that during his call. The Secretary's letter informing me of my appointment was dated 19 December 1968. From 1 January 1969 I would be Principal, on a salary of \$7206 a year.

We moved back to the School in January 1969. No students or teaching staff or domestic staff were there that day. I found my predecessor and his wife in the throes of finally packing up last bits and pieces. They were in a muddle. It was heart-rending to see them finish up at the School in that state. I arranged with the maintenance man to help load a School VW Microbus with their things and to drive it to Torquay for them. I was able to assist them in several small ways that afternoon before they finally wrenched themselves away from the cottage built for them in the grounds of the School about 1930.

There was a sad disarray of papers, momentos, folders and books littering the Principal's office. It was a sobering task sorting out what to keep of these residuals of William Litster's 40 years' at the School.

So had an era ended. He had habitually referred to the School as his school. I resolved never to call it my School, always the School. 'My School' had finished; a transition to something quite different had begun.

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## Former Principals

My vigilant neighbour right next door to the School, E J Semmens, had joined the staff as Principal in 1927 and had retired in 1952. He had secured a vacant block of Crown land adjacent to the School shortly before he retired, largely, he told me, through his acquaintance with the Secretary for Lands. The boundary fence to his house high on Eastern Hill overlooking the town had a pedestrian gate into the School grounds. He remembered me as a youth of just seventeen when I became one of his students in 1946, and expressed some wonder that here I was Principal of his former domain.

[In December 1977 an honorary doctorate in Forest Science was conferred on E J Semmens by The University of Melbourne. The ceremony was held in Tremearne House and it was the first time a degree had been conferred off the campus at Parkville. I was the go-between making the local arrangements. E J said he did not want the conferring to take place in a hall but at the School. He did not want a lot of people, and asked me to stress that he could stand for a short time only. The University party, the invited historians, Forests Commissioners and senior School staff made up the gathering. Every detail of the occasion went well, even to the orchid corsages I produced beforehand for the Chairman, Dr F R Moulds, to present to Mrs Semmens and her sister, Mrs Ewart, widow of the Professor of Botany who had done so much in his day for forestry education. The Chairman commented on my generosity when I handed him the orchids, which he thought added a gracious touch. I felt obliged to reveal to him that the Commission was paying for them.]

More importantly than his neighbourly and friendly shadow, I was under the thumb of Frank Moulds, who had been Principal from 1950 until 1957, and had secured my services as a visiting instructor in 1954. Frank had resented E J's (Ted's) perambulations in the School grounds and his conversations with students, but needed his services to teach a couple of subjects for a time, so tolerated what he could not alter.

Frank Moulds had become a Commissioner during my tour in Melbourne, and became Chairman of the Forests Commission early in 1969. I was delighted to be able to arrange a tree planting when the retiring Chairman, A O Lawrence, made his farewell visit to the School in 1969 in company with his wife, Florence. I believe it was Alf Lawrence who had devised my tour in Melbourne in 1967 and 1968, but we never spoke of it.

## A Decade of Changes

Many changes were to occur at the School during the next ten years. Some were unforeseen in 1969 and others were needed. A mix of internal and external influences presented a formidable challenge to the new Principal and his staff. Introduction of change had been resisted successfully by my predecessor. The composition of the Forests Commission was about to change, and students expected new freedoms and were unsettled by the Vietnam war and the birthday lottery for two years' full time military training. The politics of colleges of advanced education were beginning to threaten the small single-discipline colleges.

The regime of the School had been largely insulated from the changes in Australian society that occurred during the 1960s, especially those involving the young. Its disciplines were restrictive compared with other post-secondary institutions. Students were not allowed to have a car or motor cycle at the School, haircuts had to be short back and sides, growing a beard or moustache was forbidden, participation in the Anzac Day march at Creswick was required, Monday public holidays were not observed, students were not allowed to have alcoholic drinks on the campus, quiet study for two hours five evenings a week was

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required and staff were rostered to do rounds to enforce it, absence overnight or from fieldwork on Saturday mornings depended on prior permission of the Principal, and, of course, attendance at lectures and practical classes was compulsory. It was certainly time to introduce changes, selectively at a controlled rate, and with some consultation with students and a resident forestry staff who were newly or recently appointed to the School.

## Meeting the Senior Students

I felt it was essential to introduce myself to the new third year students as soon as could be, for they had entered the School a few weeks after I had moved to Melbourne. They and one of the forestry lecturers were in vacation camp at Shelley, in the Tallangatta Forest District, where the main project was a site appreciation survey of the Koetong forest block for pine plantation planning. Their program included field inspections, bush-walking and some fishing. I joined the School party for two or three days to let them size me up, before returning to Creswick to get ready for the new term. I also took the opportunity to discuss a few of my intentions with the Senior Student of the School for 1969, and to get his views on several things.

## Staff

At the beginning of 1969 only one of the previous year's forestry lecturers remained on the resident staff, and the housekeeper had decided to leave with the change of Principal.

The year 1974 was also one of substantial changes for visiting lecturers. The Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education agreed to supply lecturers in Forest Engineering I and II, and in a new subject we called Forest Zoology, which included the existing forest entomology. The additional appointments relieved staff in head office from teaching duties. There were three foresters and the science lecturer in residence, 11 regular or occasional visiting lecturers from Melbourne or Ballarat, a resident housekeeper, the office assistant, and the groundsman, who lived near the School and could turn his hand to many tasks.

By the end of 1976 we had obtained the services of an administrative officer and two more staff to maintain the arboretum and buildings, repair furniture and run a useful workshop.

The Principal could arrange the appointment of visiting lecturers with little trammel, but could merely influence an appointment to the residential staff.

## Hours of Work

The resident foresters, and the teachers of the first year physics and chemistry, worked many extra hours during term, spread over seven days. I do not refer only to the time preparing lectures and reading essays and assignments one usually expects go with a teaching job. There was the evening study quiet time during the week to keep an eye on, and a forester was rostered to supervise the Saturday fieldwork, which required him to turn up before 8.00am and to be around until afternoon. Often more than one forester spent some of the morning on fieldwork duties.

A residential college makes demands at any hour, particularly on staff living within the School grounds. I made a rule that anyone could ring the front doorbell of R7, the Principal's house, at night while the verandah light was on, otherwise there had better be an urgent reason. That worked very well. The Principal's residence was some seven metres from A V Galbraith House, the dormitory block.

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If a student took ill in the night one of his or her neighbours might wake us for help, for which my wife was a treasure, particularly after women were enrolled. She offered her help as a neighbour, not as a trained nurse or the Principal's wife. She knew both the doctors in the town well, and they respected her assessment of a situation, and were prepared to come straight away to examine the student or, as happened a couple of times, arranging to see the student at the Creswick hospital a few minutes later when we took him or her there. Upon our return on a couple of occasions, we shared hot drinks in our kitchen with one or more students worried about their mate before we all returned to our beds.

I recently came across entries in my rough diary from January to August 1974 showing the main weekend hours I was out and about the School buildings and grounds, excluding short interruptions and calls to the kitchen or A V Galbraith House. For those eight months I recorded 59 hours on Saturdays and 41 on Sundays. The daily entries ranged from one hour to 10 (when there was an Open Day or some other calendar occasion).

My teaching occupied eight hours a week in the classroom and wood technology lab, and there were occasional afternoon excursions to forests and forest industries in the Ballarat district. A lot of the office and administrative work was done early and late. The typist who comprised the office staff in the early 1970s told me she did not look forward to Mondays because of the weekend's dictaphone tapes of letters and sundry other things to type up. She was a notably hard worker, who's days at the School ended when she married and moved away. [I ran into her and her husband in a corner shop in Canterbury one evening in the mid-1980s, and she asked me didn't I think we were a good team?].

## **Board of Forestry Education**

The Board of Forestry Education guided the fortunes of the School in several ways.

Before the Forests Commission was established (1919), the first examiners under the Forests Act 1907 were appointed in 1908, and the first examination of persons temporarily employed by the Forests Department was held in 1909.

A new Board of Examiners was appointed in 1916 under the Forests Act 1915, to continue its work. For several years its membership was a succession of distinguished academics in The University of Melbourne, the Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools, The Director of Education, Chief of Forest Products in CSIR, and the Commissioners of Forests.

For the annual interviews of students in 1969 the members of the Board were Professor J S Turner (botany), Professor A S Buchanan (chemistry), Dr J S Rogers (physics), Mr F H Brooks (director-general of education for Victoria), Professor J F Lovering (geology), the three Commissioners of Forests ( Dr F R Moulds, Mr C W Elsey, Mr A J Threader), Dr R J Grose (Chief, Division of Forestry Education and Research), Mr J H Chinner (Reader in forestry in The University), and the Principal of the School. The influence of The University on the affairs of the School were thus apparent, although I must make it clear that these members were not chosen to represent their faculties nor The University; they were appointed as individuals judged to be fit and proper for the job by the Governor-in-Council.

The two-day annual meeting of the Board in December commenced promptly after the members had assembled at the School for morning tea, and concluded the following afternoon. After the Board had dealt with preliminary agenda every student was interviewed, in the light of his or her examination results, fieldwork report and general personal report prepared to assist the members of the Board in their questions

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and comments. The Board relied a lot on the brief summaries of fieldwork and the general assessment prepared by the Principal, who might add some comments orally in response to a question before a student came in. The secretary to the Board, the senior administrative officer in the Commission's Division of Forestry Education and Research, with whom I worked continually throughout the year, fetched each student as required and guided the chairman of the meeting through the agenda.

My predecessor's personal reports on the students had been pithy and revealed personal quirks and episodes which were not, in my view important to the Board's review. My view was strengthened by the fact that these reports became a permanent item in the individual's file for the term of his service with the Department. There was a time when I argued that a file should commence after leaving the School, upon appointment to the service, but that did not get far. So, the temptation to include an amusing comment about a 19-year old in training was resisted.

I set out to compile the reports not solely or largely on my views, but by inviting all resident teaching staff to comment on every student's performance. Any comments made by visiting lecturers about a student were remembered and taken into account. I recall one senior year quizzing me about the reports I was about to put together on them: they were uneasy that they were vulnerable to comments they could not influence. I said they were welcome to draft their own reports for typing up, but none took up the offer. I said that any of them could read their own reports in confidence before the Board interviews if they wished, if they felt they might be hardly done by, but none asked to see his report.

For the first couple of annual meetings I sat at a small side table, speaking only when invited by the chairman of the Board, as had been customary. Then I was asked to join the others at the table, which properly recognised the office of Principal, and allowed me opportunity to chip in when I thought it expedient, to help the Board or a student.

The members of the Board stayed overnight in Ballarat, and after a dismal experience when several of them filled in the evening at a cinema I was virtually ordered to arrange some entertainment for them in future. I devised some most enjoyable events, not too hard for me to do in Ballarat then as I knew it. One year we took the dining room in the Victoria Hotel at Sovereign Hill, preceded by a tour of exhibits led by the Executive Director of the Historical Park. Unfortunately the date of the Board's visit did not coincide with a theatrical performance there. Another year, dinner in a pavilion in the botanic gardens was preceded by a twilight cruise on Lake Wendouree, with historical commentary, in the ferry which I was able to charter for the occasion. Perhaps the best event was dinner at tables set up downstairs in the Fine Art Gallery, catered for by a neighbouring restaurant: that took some organising. Members of the Board were relaxed with wine in hand wandering around the Norman Lindsays and other works. Would you believe that string players were engaged to entertain the gathering for part of the evening? The cost was not an extravagance, for the good mood of members of the Board was priceless. I was sorry that attendance was restricted to members of the Board, for I reckoned that resident teaching staff of the School deserved an invitation.

The staff managed to get a say about anything on their mind during morning and afternoon tea breaks, and during the luncheon adjournments of the Board's December meeting. We gathered in the Principal's house for drinks before lunch in the School dining room, and this provided opportunity to put in a word here and there. Often a member of the Board would pick his mark and quiz a staff member about some student's progress or for his views on some question to come before the Board. The School was fortunate indeed to have a supervising body of such experienced and influential men: I suppose nobody had ever thought of appointing a woman.

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The other main task of the Board was conducting scholarship interviews in January, for which it had a sub-committee of three. For most of my principal's years it comprised, Mr R H Wilkinson (physics at The University) who replaced Dr Rogers in 1970, Mr Commissioner Threader, and me. Mr Wilkinson was chairman, which he claimed was to add some respectability to the committee.

The selection interviews ran over two days, timed so that offers would be made before university offers were published. The Year 12 prerequisites of English, physics, chemistry and mathematics were strict, and the personal references were important in deciding which applicants would be interviewed. Soon after the Christmas/New Year break the Secretary and I ploughed through the applications on behalf of the committee, ranking them as we thought best. It took a good deal of extra time working out some results from other Australian states, and from technical schools. For that the office of the Director-General of Education was most helpful. A few applicants had overseas school results, and obtaining reliable assessments of them took more time still, not always easy early in January. The list for interviews that we recommended was never challenged, but we were careful to draw attention to really borderline applications we had rejected.

## Diploma Curriculum

The list of subjects of study changed little over the years but their content was reviewed continually. The wording of most syllabuses accords, of course, plenty of elbow room to change emphasis and the treatment of topics before a new description is needed.

In 1974 the former forest entomology subject was replaced by Forest Zoology, comprising expanded topics from the former syllabus in forest entomology and an introduction to vertebrate zoology. The two parts of Forest Engineering were updated.

Although the titles of syllabuses do not convey much, the scope and general nature of the course are indicated by the list of subjects in 1977: botany, physics, chemistry, geology, introduction to forestry (including forest botany) in the first year — in the second and third years a forest biology group comprising ecology, zoology, pathology and silviculture; a wood science and forest products grouping of wood technology and forests products parts A and B; forest measurements and inventory comprising mensuration, statistics, surveying, photo-interpretation and photogrammetry, and introduction to computer programming; and the forest management group, namely, fire protection, forest soils, forest management parts 1, 2, and 3, forest economics, and forest engineering parts 1, 2, and 3. [Forest soils seems ill-classified now, but there must have been reason enough to group the subject under 'forest management' in 1977].

## Ensuing Degree Studies

By the end of the 1960s most of the Creswick diplomates could anticipate a place at The University of Melbourne supported by the Forests Commission to do the third and fourth years of the degree course in forest science, after working for a year in the field. Access to Public Service Board free places was no longer open to Creswick diplomates, but the increasing number the Commission was able to allocate outshone the former opportunities.

From 1970 to 1979 the number of foresters on full time study leave enrolled in the third and fourth university years increased from 13 to 25. The annual average was 18.

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Not only did they receive full salary, but compulsory university and union fees were paid for them, and the Commission covered the costs of class excursions in Victoria and an annual interstate excursion. The traineeship for the Creswick course had, in effect, become a doubly valuable award. In six years one gained the Diploma and the Degree, separate and distinct qualifications, and had accumulated field experience in student vacations and during the field year. Of course there was a bond attached to both the Creswick and the University years, but these were, with rare exceptions, pieces of paper in a bottom drawer to be found one day long after the bond periods had expired.

The high chances of a Creswick diplomate going on to degree studies allowed the Principal to certify to that effect during a student's third year at the School, to support his application for deferment of two years' full time National Service military training, for which the birthday lottery had been reintroduced in mid-1965. For a few students I used the opportunity to give them a pep talk, explaining that final exam results might be important in assessing the application, not that I imagined the machinery existed for such an audit. Any haunting shadow evaporated at the end of 1972, when the interim two-man ministry of the new Commonwealth government announced the immediate end of National Service call-up.

Degree opportunities were by no means confined to undergraduate studies for foresters. The Commission encouraged promising foresters and officers of the Department with other qualifications to take on postgraduate research, either part-time or full time. From 1970 to 1979 there were, on average, six officers on full time leave, the number ranging from four to eight.

Accounting and other administrative fields were catered for by part-time study by city and regional staff at universities and colleges. Officers at remote places had to make do with correspondence studies.

The Forests Commission invested heavily in future skills and capacities. It may fairly be said that it showed a vision and resolve to have well-prepared ranks of scientists, foresters and technicians to carry public forest protection and management forward to a bright future.

## **Diploma Enrolments**

The tallies of new and departing students are recorded elsewhere: in Tyalla the students' annual magazine, the Commission's annual reports, and departmental files.

Suffice to say here that the first year intakes increased until, in 1975, there were 19 new students, and A V Galbraith House was fully occupied for the first time since it was opened in 1961. The number of study bedrooms had been set to match the previous peak of 39 students at the School, a curious decision really.

Accommodation for 10 students was provided in 1977, when the Stawell Timber Industries building was erected in the north-eastern corner of the main grounds.

The lecture rooms and labs just coped with classes of 20, with some occasional inconvenience.

## **Refresher Courses**

The Commission decided to run two refresher courses for field foresters at the School during student vacations. The courses were devised and staffed entirely by officers from head office and the field, and by invited interstate lecturers of note.

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In 1969 the second term was shortened to accommodate the first refresher course. The second ran for 12 days in May 1970. The main inconvenience was felt by the students, who had to clean out their rooms in A V Galbraith House for the visitors. The students' gear was packed into the science labs for the duration.

## Victorian Year Book

A distraction from my main work was a direction to write the feature article for the Victorian Year Book 1972. The request for an article 'Forests of Victoria' running to 12000 words had been received at head office from its editor, Mr Henry Speagle, and no one there was willing to take on the assignment. Foresters in head office had successfully put my name forward. So much for a tour of duty during which I had been found useful.

The editor explained to me that he wanted an expository article, with no special pleading in it, on the forest types and their flora and fauna, as far as the word-limit allowed, with no account of the forest industries. Apart from that he would wait and see what I made of its first drafts. There were to be photographs, but they could come after the text was settled, and he agreed that a new map was warranted. After my first meeting with Mr Speagle, I secured the cooperation of the Commission's Chief Draughtsman and the foresters responsible for forest inventory to start on the map. They agreed to produce for the first time a map of the State showing the main pine plantations as well as the native forests.

To make time for the selection of information and writing in the earlier stages I worked late at night and in the very early morning, often from four o'clock. I was in the classroom or lab for eight hours a week, and the associated preparation and reading students' work was taking a deal of time. The administrative and planning demands of the job could not be set aside. I had not got by with as little sleep since the postgraduate imperatives of my final semester at Berkeley. Some long time after, I tallied up those night and pre-dawn hours and they exceeded 240. Of course, I did use standard hours to some extent.

The article was completed on time and to the complete satisfaction of Mr Speagle, who checked the final proof in January 1972. The map served its purpose well, and in time the photographs and captions were finalised. It was necessary to take fresh photos, which called for travel with a photographer, some of the time unfortunately while I left my wife and children while we were on holiday. During the writing assignment I had received substantial help with up to date botanical names and editorial encouragement from D W M Paine, the forest assessor.

It was a treat to work with Henry Speagle. He secured my services for some future Year Book articles. [In November 2003 we had a happy encounter when he was in Mornington for a meeting. He introduced me to a colleague as 'one of my writers.']

## Rules

At the beginning of 1969 there were variously printed rules for the School which read impressively but not all of them were enforced.

On 1 January 1969 the Forests (Part II – Staff) Regulations 1969 were approved. These Regulations were made under section 99 of the Forests Act 1950, and provided that every trainee;

- conduct himself in a manner satisfactory to the Commission and at all times comply with the reasonable requirements of the Principal of the School or institution, the rules applying thereto and these Regulations

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- undertake the course of study from time to time required by the Commission
- present himself at such examinations as are required of him
- and engage in practical work and studies in the forests, plantations, nurseries and other places when so required by the Principal of the School.

In response to requests by some students for a detailed list of rules, I issued a list of no fewer than 31 in February 1970, in time for the start of the year. I did not, of course, desire to make such a list, but judged it to be a reasonable request for the students to make. The list was an expansion of the old ones on file when I took over, with a few deletions about which I did not inform the Commission, and with several added by myself. A couple of the additions were virtually the wording of Commission Decisions, for example, 'Trainees shall not have motor vehicles in their possession at the School'.

My copy of these rules has two amendments inked in by me. In July 1970 I persuaded the Commission to allow Rule 4 to be amended to delete the underlined words as follows:

'Trainees shall not write to any Member of Parliament at any time nor write any letters to the Press or other organisation on matters that impinge directly or indirectly on the Commission's interests or activities.' That rule had been introduced by the Commission in 1969 when some students had written to a Melbourne newspaper and to the Member for Ballarat North about the security of the Little Desert from land clearing. The furore when the letter was published is burnt into my memory. The fuss focussed our attention on mutually vital problems; how would I fulfil my role as go-between while shielding the students from aspects of the Chairman's and the Commission's restrictions, and how the students would tolerate restriction in return for relaxations as they were made. In this particular instance the Chairman broke the Commission's own standing instruction, that instructions given orally be confirmed in writing. The wording of Rule 4 was as dictated to me on the telephone, the Chairman refusing to confirm it in writing. The deletion resulted from my spoken representations that it was wrong to forbid a citizen from writing to his Member of Parliament, and publicity to that effect could be bad for the Commission.

The other amendment I had written in, in February 1971, was pleasing to the staff and students. Rule 28 was an old one: 'Trainees shall not have motor vehicles in their possession at the School'. This was a hardship for those students who could afford a car, because there was no public transport useful for students to get into Ballarat and around the district, and it was embarrassing for them to depend on friends. The staff were concerned about the hazards of hitchhiking, promoted by the car ban. An incident helped a lot: a third year student who hitched to Ballarat with two young men, strangers, reported to me that they had behaved badly toward him, and he was lucky to elude them. If memory serves, I think he told me his parents were very concerned and would let the Commission know that, if I wanted. It did not come to that. In response to my written recommendation, and representations during the January interviews of applicants, the rule was changed to "Trainees may have motor vehicles in their possession at the School under the conditions prescribed by the Principal". The onus was on me to see things went right; this was rubbed in in almost threatening terms – if anything goes wrong you'll cop it. I prescribed that a motor cycle was not a motor vehicle for the purpose of the rule, and altered the rule to include that. [Students were not attracted to motor cycles in the Creswick climate; they are not a social conveyance, and luggage capacity is scanty. Not one student complained.]

It was essential for me to relax the day by day control of students' activities and liberties, little by little in my view. Recollection of details here would be tedious.

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The extent to which the discipline of the 1960s had been relaxed by 1971 attracted editorial comment under a heading 'Circumspice' in Tyalla, the students' annual magazine. The articles written for the magazine were unknown to staff until they received their copies. Rather than plunder it for examples, here is the article in full.

*"During the past three years many changes have occurred at the Victorian School of Forestry – changes which have made life at the School mean far more than merely remaining apart from the outside world in order to study until you blow your mind or receive the coveted Diploma. Many ex-students of the School would no doubt be surprised to learn that Juniors are now allowed to go out on a Saturday night; that some students now sport beards, and short-back-and-sides are virtually a thing of the past; that students keep their own cars at the School; and that at weekends Seniors are not bound to remain at the School but can spend their weekends where they choose after Saturday morning fieldwork is over, provided they can be contacted if necessary. These changes have been progressive and their success has depended largely on the responsible attitudes of the students adapting to them.*

*If you have not registered surprise yet, then maybe you will when you learn that, on the whole, academic achievements and standards of study at the School have not declined over this period, but in fact have remained high, and possibly have been boosted by the new successful approach to life at the VSF*

*'We have not mentioned all the changes at the School. Some are extensive, some are small, but still they are there, and "Tyalla" would now take this opportunity to extend sincere thanks and gratitude, on behalf of all the present students, to the driving force behind life at the School of Forestry – to all members of the resident lecturing staff.'*

The custom was for all the students, in the VSF blazer, to march on Anzac Day in Creswick with the returned men, and the Scouts, Guides, Brownies and others, to the memorial near the Post Office for the commemoration ceremony. I accommodated the stance of a sole objector by asking him to be monitor for the national flag on the mast above the main building of the School, which he gladly accepted. Views on the Vietnam conflict and the national service obligation over their heads made some students question whether they wanted to take part in public observance of Anzac Day in a student body. They did not ask for release from the expectation that they would turn out. After a couple of years I took the plunge and announced that participation would be voluntary, which was surprisingly unpopular with some because it made them make a personal decision. When I told the RSL President, who had been a prisoner of the Japanese, that marching was now voluntary he was none too pleased. [He was the local plumber who knew the old piping throughout the School well, and he came when needed for repairs. He came one day to fix a problem and noticed that I had changed our Austin car for a Toyota Corona. He said he was sorry I had bought a Japanese car and would never come to the School again, although another plumber could ask him for information about the plumbing at the School. I pointed out that one of the town's doctors had a German car, the other an Italian one, both made in former enemy countries, and yet he did work for the doctors. He said I did not understand the difference, and we went our ways.]

For two or three years some students marched on Anzac Day, but the numbers dropped away quite rapidly. I continued to represent the School at the memorial for the ceremony and wreath-laying. The no-more short-back-and-sides attracted comment during one march. The proprietor of the Creswick newspaper was standing next to me as the marchers approached. He turned and said 'What has happened to their standards?' I told him what was between the ears was more important than what was behind them, and drew his attention to the hair of the young bandsmen. 'Not the same, not the same,' was his reply. [A similar incident cropped up when I took the senior class to South Melbourne in September for the week at the

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lecture room and labs of the CSIRO Division of Forests Products to which we were treated every year. Their Information Officer, who arranged the program of lectures and demonstrations, took me aside on the second day to say that he and his colleagues were asking "What has happened to the Creswick students' trim short back and sides and their general appearance?" I suggested he look hard at the young in his own suburban street, if not at the sons of his colleagues. He readily agreed that the VSF students were courteous, attentive and showed every sign of appreciating the CSIRO program. I suppose some students had reacted a trifle extremely to the relaxation of the haircut rule, but any longish hair was clean; the water and heating bills at the School vouched for frequent showers. Our good relationship with the Information Officer and his colleagues continued after that].

Changes to rules were discussed with the students beforehand, except for an apparently trivial one. Together we were jealous of the reputation of our School, in the town and in the eyes of the Forests Commission. Our success was a measure of how well the closed, all-residential School community pulled together.

The apparently trivial change was one which I made without consultation. A discipline of the School had been to wear shoes to lectures and the dining room. Thongs would be quiet, were cheaper and certainly more comfortable in warmer weather. So, thongs were approved by a surprise decree. Closed footwear was worn in the labs and when announced visitors were around. Closed footwear was mandatory for fieldwork and during excursions, of course. It was prudent to make some changes before any request might be made by the students.

## **Main Buildings and Services**

One of my first moves in 1969 was to enlist the aid of the Medical Officer of Health for the Shire in securing some improvements to facilities in the kitchen and laundry. He could not inspect State premises without an invitation and gladly came at my request. His recommendations resulted in the speedy provision of a hand basin in the kitchen and improved plumbing in the laundry. Every week the laundress had been carrying about 70 buckets of very hot water from the wood copper to the washing machine and troughs. At a later stage I arranged for hot water to be piped from the oil-fired cylinder in the nearby dormitory block into the laundry. The laundress, a taciturn woman, shed a tear when she turned open a tap over a trough and hot water flowed into it.

By 1972 funding had been obtained for alteration and renovation of the dining room, kitchen, and laundry wing. This had to be done under the thumb of the Public Works Department, an illuminating experience. For design, supervision and administration (DSA) they took about eleven per cent of the total contract price. The work was estimated to take six weeks, but took from Easter to September. For those winter months we used a Forests Commission mobile kitchen in the quadrangle, and a classroom on the other side became the dining room. It was twelve weeks best forgotten. The collective incompetence of the PWD was hard to swallow. I submitted an itemised report to the Commission supporting a recommendation that never again should we have to endure the PWD, but was not favoured with a reply.

The kitchen renovations involved replacement of the wood-fired stove and ovens with an oil range, second-hand from some institution. I tried hard to resist this, advocating a gas installation, but was over-ruled. The oil range gave continual trouble: it was no pleasure to be called at 6.30 in the morning by the cook complaining of oil on the floor and a cold firebox. My successor chided me that I should have opted for tank gas, and that I was foolish to choose oil. So events unfold.

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Creswick was unsewered in the early 1970s. The School residences had their own septic tank and the dormitories were served by a tank with a capacity of about 1800 gallons. The ablution block for the Certificate students was provided with its own septic system. But, when the enrolment of Diploma students grew, the old tank became inadequate. When the "sty" dormitory was being assembled for 1977 a sewage plant was purchased, of capacity to serve it and the main buildings. This was delivered in sections and assembled in a gully below the main grounds.

The new accommodation of 10 study/bedrooms and a central common room was dubbed the sty by the students because it came from Stawell Timber Industries and was assembled on the slope not far from the old workshop. It was heated by hot-water radiators for which I battled hard, arguing that the system would be silent, distribute no dust, and socks or a towel could be draped on a radiator., and any unoccupied room could be isolated. A particular acquaintance in the Commission's Buildings Branch, who always liked the School's hospitality when he visited, helped get approval for the heating system.

I was seized with an idea to use the effluent from the sewage tank in some useful way. One of the forestry teaching staff designed piping and sprays to irrigate a grassed area below the STI dormitory with water pumped from the final tank. It worked splendidly and we boasted green lawn throughout the summers.

## **Tremearne House**

The interior of Tremearne House was in a poor state. Maintenance of the main front rooms and those upstairs had been neglected over many years, and in the early 1950s students had been responsible for knocking the fabric about badly, in contrast to the late 1940s and formerly when the house had been treated with a kind of awe. The shabbiness had reached the stage when one could not take visitors inside. It was not always convincing to tell them, standing in the neat arboretum gazing at the attractive exterior (even with some ironwork missing from the balcony), that there was not time to inspect inside.

It was beyond our resources at the School to restore the place. A grant through the Victoria Institute of Colleges seemed the best option to go for. With a nod from head office, I engaged Ewan Jones, the noted architect in Ballarat, to report on the soundness of the building and the prospects for restoration. He and I were two of the enthusiasts who were working for the development of Sovereign Hill, and his fee was quite small. He was impressed by the quality of stonework at the front of the house, and said the foundations would take a ten-storey building. All I was after was a restored two-storeys.

It took time to establish the case and to wait a decision about funds. The keen interest of the State Member for Ballarat North, whom I had known since student days, was encouraging.

The material highlight of 1973 was renovation of this house built by Dr John Tremearne. A family house of the 1880s was ready to serve the needs of a small college in the 1980s. We had a theatrette, a conference room, workrooms for entomology and forest pathology, and expanded herbarium, in a structure nicely heated for the first time. Transfer of the main general museum from the old hospital building had released about 75 square metres of the south wing to be partitioned into a calculator room and staff offices.

The work on Tremearne had to be handled through the Public Works Department, because a condition imposed by the Commonwealth was that the funds had to be spent using the services of the PWD of the State in question. This was a pain, all the more because I could anticipate troubles from the experience over the work in the main building in 1972. First, we lost over 11 per cent of the grant for DSA, that is, design, supervision and administration, and second, we did not get our money's worth. Arrogance,

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deception, incompetence might seem harsh words, but they were earned. By default, I had to oversee a lot of detail between the supervising architect's visits from Melbourne.

At last it had become a pleasure to show any visitor through the building, and to stand on the balcony overlooking the arboretum with Creswick on the skyline to the west.

Instead of being a very cold place, Tremeame became inviting during the colder months, owing to hydronic heating from an oil furnace installed near the back door through which maids must have carried many tons of firewood when the family lived there. The wood from mature trees grown in America, Australia and New Zealand from which the tall skirting boards, architraves and other interior fittings had been moulded became drier than it had ever been. It was instructive to point out new shrinkage to students, and to do some simple determinations of moisture content in the building, and to compare them with measurements out of doors and in the wood tech. lab. itself.

The uses we had in mind for Tremearne were short-lived, owing to the inauguration of the Certificate courses and the need to accommodate research workers. The former took over the two main front rooms and the old kitchen, and the original morning room became a lab for a research scientist seconded from CSIRO working on a fungal pathogen. Upstairs, one of the small seminar rooms became an office for a Commission silviculture researcher whose field work took him far and wide. I remember resisting as best I could the invasion of Tremearne by the research men, but orders are orders. Relations were soon harmonious; both of the research men were willing to assist occasionally with Diploma courses, and they were welcome to call on the facilities in the science block for their work. Later on, the Commission researcher headquartered at the School presented many of the silviculture lectures.

Tremearne House was used to capacity, but in ways not imagined when its renovation to serve the needs of a small college was no more than an ambition.

## Funding

The Forests Act authorised the Forests Commission to expend funds which were available to it on running the School, and this included the Forestry Fund as an important source. The Fund was maintained annually by half the revenue from the sale of forest produce (as defined by the Act). In practical measure this equated to half the royalties received from the sale of sawlogs and other timber. The Fund provided the Commission with money to spend as it saw fit, within broad definitions of what was proper. I suspect that, if it were practicable and possible now, enquiry would show that the Fund enabled the Commission to maintain the School as well as it did.

The annual budget for running the School during the 1970s was always adequate. Fighting for a basic level of funding was never a worry of the Principal. The three Commissioners seemed to have had VSF graven on their hearts. This applied similarly to more than half the senior officers of the Department.

A fairly new budgeting system had been introduced, in which Function was the upper limit, in the hierarchy of item, account, area, function and whatever, above which a regional officer could not transfer funds at will between heads of expenditure, to rob Peter to pay Paul. The ability to transfer funds was precious, of course, late in the financial year. It happened that the entire operation of the School fell within the one Function, 37 from memory. This allowed me to make any expedient transfers at will, something the Chief Finance Officer and myself agreed not to talk around. He was a staunch ally of the School throughout.

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Commonwealth grants through the Victoria Institute of Colleges were obtained to restore Tremeame House, to put books for the library, to buy major items of laboratory equipment and even a caravan built as a mobile office–laboratory for use at field locations.

## Master Plan

The rate of change of the School's role and the development of the system of colleges of advanced education prompted attention to coming up with a plan for the development of the School for future needs.

In 1975 a master plan for the development of the campus until 1981 was developed, adopted by the Forests Commission and submitted to the Victoria Institute of Colleges, through which funding for various purposes might be obtained.

The School staff learned in the process of making this plan that the consultants appointed for the purpose contrived to make the staff contribute more to the inputs into data-collection and the planning than the uninitiated might imagine.

The plan was handy to show certain visitors but was largely overtaken by the unforeseen changes in the role of the School.

## Library

The collection forming the library had its beginnings well before there was a forestry school in Victoria, for some books had been acquired by the State Forests Department or the Forests Branch before 1909.

The Forests Commission saw to it that funds were available for subscriptions to journals published in England, USA, South Africa, India, and New Zealand. The Commission was also notably supportive of its library in Melbourne, and provided a very good circulating service to make journals and other publications readily available to its field staff.

While I was on the tour of duty in Melbourne in 1968 the Commission nominated me to represent it on an ad hoc library committee to recommend allocation of capital funds to colleges of advanced education. The small colleges represented were the Emily MacPherson college, the agricultural colleges and the School of Forestry. The chairman was Philip Law, of Antarctic fame, who was convinced that the bookless library was just around the corner. The RMIT was represented by Jack Ward, its chief librarian and well-disposed to the small colleges as it turned out. The librarian of La Trobe University (which admitted its first students in 1967), Dietrich Muelder, was a member. We met some half dozen times from memory, and the meetings were harmonious, instructive to me, and profitable for the School. The committee made several inspections of libraries, for me the most memorable being at Lincoln House, home of the therapy schools. The committee was attracted to a simple formula for distributing the total funds between the colleges - too simple when RMIT had thousands of EFT (equivalent full-time) students compared with the handful at the smallest colleges. I put the case for a threshold piece of cake for the latter, enough for a real gain in bookstock. Jack liked the idea, saying that his library would scarcely miss \$12000 or so which would mean a lot to Emily MacPherson and Creswick. Dietrich backed him, and the deal was done.

The funds provided through State Grants (Advanced Education) for bookstock in 1969 allowed the new staff of the School to select many new texts and references for the library.

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The library also served as a common room of sorts and was used by students and staff at all hours. It had been extended in the 1940s but was inadequate for our needs.

During 1972 the library accommodation was altered and renovated, and further funds spent on additions to bookstock and modern furnishings.

The next move was to organise and catalogue the bookstock properly, for it was classified according to subjects of study and in the ways that seemed sensible to the succession of students who had run the library for decades. This was going to be a hard thing to arrange. The Melbourne office and the Public Service Board received overtures for a trained librarian rather coldly, so some other ally would be needed. Fortunately the Principal and the Chief Librarian of the Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education were willing to help, but it took until the beginning of 1974 to get one of their librarians, John Van Dreven, into our library, for two days a week. There was no difficulty in getting the approval of the Forests Commission to cover that cost. The BIAE provided John's services until August 1976, until he could no longer be spared. He compiled a valuable report on what he had achieved in cataloguing the bookstock according to the Oxford Decimal Classification, then commonly used for specialised forestry libraries. We decided at the beginning not to tackle the large collection of pamphlets and reprints which were kept in boxes, reasoning that they were accessible enough by broad subject.

John Van Dreven was helpful to students and staff using the library and we were sorry to see him go. He had been assisted by Mrs Mary Ryan, a resident of Creswick with clerical skills who was interested in the work. Approval of her employment by the Public Service Board was out of the question, but I could engage her as a housemaid/waitress on the domestic staff, paying her wages in the same way as those of the domestic and outdoor staff. Fortunately, Mrs Ryan saw the humour in the situation, and was also discreet. On the occasion of an inspection of the School by certain bureaucrats from Melbourne I had to ask her to take the day off, there being no easy way to justify a typing waitress in the library.

The Victoria Institute of Colleges required annual statistical returns which included information about the library. One question asked the number of hours a week the library was open during term. Year after year our reply was 168 hours. Year after year the VIC offices wrote to point out the mistake, and asked for the correct figures. The library was open day and night; it always had been and there was no reason to change that, for it suited night owls and early risers well. Locking and unlocking would have been a nuisance for someone.

It seemed there were very slim chances of securing the services of a trained librarian, but, happily, Mrs Jean Baker and her husband moved to North Creswick, and her services would be available. Not only was she an experienced librarian, she had worked in CSIRO and other specialised libraries, and was keen to foster effective use of the library by students. The diversified role of the School and the number of students relying on access to an efficient library, especially during intensive short courses, tipped the scales: our application for appointment of a librarian was successful. Jean was soon tutor in library use for the students, and it was a pleasure to call her library sessions fieldwork exercises. Past students have remarked that the confidence they gained in using libraries was most helpful when they went on to The University. Her cheerful endeavours and gentle ways were appreciated by all. Even in midwinter it was sometimes a matter of tact to persuade her to stop work and go home, such was her immersion in her work.

Perhaps the library at Creswick has lost its former importance, and Dr Law was right, although the corner was not as close as he thought in 1968. In the mid-1990s I was invited to assist some postgraduate overseas students settle in at the forestry school at Parkville. In preparation I introduced myself to the

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librarians, to arrange for them to meet the newcomers and help them find their way around. I was puzzled to see so few students in the agriculture/forestry library, and remarked on that. The librarians suggested I look into two large computer rooms on the ground floor. There was not a spare computer in either room: they were the place to search for information, to download text and graphics (instead of taking notes or photocopying), and for compiling essays and papers.

## **Certificate Courses**

These courses came to Creswick owing to a visit to the School in May 1974 by the Hon R J Hamer, Premier of Victoria since 1972. He and the Minister of Forests, the Hon F J Granter, and the Chairman of the Forests Commission came one day during the students' vacation, so their rather detailed inspection of the place was informal and relaxed. We entertained them at lunch; I recall him remarking on the pleasant outlook under the cherry tree by the front of the residence.

I knew already that the Premier was interested in residential courses for staff of the natural resource agencies. He was particularly interested in the travelling times to Creswick from various towns in the State. I displayed these from various centres on a map of the State. I had arranged for oblique aerial photographs of the School buildings and grounds to be taken a few days before, and he spent some time taking in detail from large black and white prints. He and I were driven in his car through the demonstration pine plantations and part of the hardwood forest on the way to the State Nursery, where the Chairman and the Minister had gone ahead.

I sensed that it had been a successful occasion, but had an uneasy hunch about what it might lead to. The Diploma enrolments were increasing and the facilities at the School had been much improved with the renovation of Tremearne House.

The Premier wasted no time in trying out some new courses. The same year the School was headquarters on two occasions for ten officers and their instructors for one week of their induction into the field staff of the Soil Conservation Authority. These heralded the recognition of the School as a centre for forestry and allied subjects of the Certificate of Applied Science (Conservation and Resource Development) courses in April 1975.

The need for places to sleep became acute. A motel had recently been built in Creswick, and I was able to negotiate nightly rates for multiple occupancy (two or three per unit) for all but one or two units reserved for regular guests. The students used to go home at weekends, leaving their belongings in a store at the motel. The owner of the motel was all smiles over the high occupancy. The Premier was also Treasurer, which no doubt simplified getting approval for the expenditure.

Fifteen single huts were erected by contract at the School in 1975-76, grouped around an ablutions block that arrived on a low-loader. The bureaucracy was such that I had little influence on the design or placing of the huts on an area outside the established grounds. The scene was reminiscent of the forests camps of the 1940s. I called the huts 'cabins in the pines', but the 'huts in the trees' later became 'Siberia' after a resident had photographed the scene on a sunny day and the black and white prints looked like a desolate snow-scene. It was a couple of years before new shrubs and small trees grew enough to soften and begin to offer shade. In 1976-77 huts to accommodate a further fifteen students were erected, this time by Forests Commission men and building apprentices from the Gordon Institute of Technology at Geelong. Three of the new buildings contained three bedrooms each, opening from a protective verandah. A short-

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course classroom was erected between the cabins and the main grounds. This had a pleasant outlook and served well.

By 1977 the calendar of courses was full. It was a headache for the co-ordinator, scheduling the classes in core and elective subjects when there were groups from two or more natural resource agencies in residence. There was little breathing time between successive courses; for example, they ran from 11 July to 19 August, 5 September to 14 October, and 17 October to 25 November.

The Certificate courses were approved and supervised from the beginning by the Education Department. The developing ambitions of certain of its officers to control the running of courses and staffing started to cause us problems. There were moves for the Creswick operation to be taken over by the college in Ballarat. Scheming and deception started to replace the earlier mood of the technical educators, and there were some serious skirmishes. Obviously the School and the Commission would be defeated in the end: it was a question of how and how long it would take. The financial argument against Creswick was pretty strong in the eyes of those who dismissed the quality of the educational experience enjoyed by the block-release Certificate students. The opposition were interested in what sufficed, not what was superior. The unit costs of accommodating students at, say, Frankston, in a student hostel looked good compared with the Creswick cost. Also, more favourable figures for the teaching costs could be produced for a metropolitan college, even if the course were presented by instructors without the same knowledge and experience. The merits of a specialised library at hand, open all the time, and full dining room service seven days a week our opponents would not concede, yet we, being full-time resident staff, knew how both were appreciated by our short-term students.

One anecdote will allow me to turn from this line of recollection. The scheming of a certain senior official of the Education Department was near intolerable, notably over appointing an instructor to work at the School but without any reference to the Principal who would be the chap on the spot responsible for his behaviour and standard of teaching. An appointment had been made, of a person with a forestry qualification known to the School staff and someone whose employment I would have vetoed. It was one thing for the Education Department to employ him at one of their establishments, another at the Commission's only School. I made an appointment to interview the Director-General of Education and took the forester in charge of our program with me. The intolerable official was also present, as we expected. I remember that I enjoyed the encounter, and that the D-G kept saying in a raised voice at one stage, 'I want principles, not facts!' We came away disappointed with the man's inflexibility, knowing we had gained nothing useful. My colleague was distressed, unfortunately, and I took him into the lounge of the Windsor Hotel on our way back to the car park in Treasury Place, to fortify him with a brandy and something to eat. After that we got home uneventfully.

The School fulfilled its obligation to serve the State and the Commission, and contributed in a unique way to the Certificate courses during those years.

## Communications

The increased enrolments of Diploma and Certificate students, accompanied by more resident staff and many visiting lecturers and tutors, signalled a need for a simple means of effective internal communication at the School.

The answer was a weekly diary issued as an A4 page at 4.30 pm every Friday with a copy for all students and staff. The one-sided sheet summarised what would be doing the following week. Field trips by the

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various classes, visitors, absences, observances, any item which would inform the school community. Items were lodged with the office assistant between three and four, and she edited them to fit the page, and ran off the copies, up to 110 some weeks. A few copies were sent to head office by post. My motto for the sheet was, 'We don't want it perfect, we want it 4.30'. It served its purpose very well, allowing staff and students to cooperate better and prevent any 'didn't know' moans. The three maintenance and grounds staff, the kitchen staff and the cleaners got their own copy and that improved morale, especially at those times when facilities were taxed and staff a little stressed. Unfortunately I kept no specimen of this ephemeral sheet.

Regular meetings, usually weekly, of the full-time Diploma teaching staff turned out to be effective in lubricating occasional points of friction. These were the only times we could focus on a topic together and air our contributions toward decisions.

The exchanges of information about all aspects of School life were useful to us all. Before such meetings were held, it was hit and miss whether everyone was kept in the picture. Our meetings followed printed agenda.

The Student Council did not hold back in expressing opinions or making reasonable requests, and individual students often took up a problem or question with the staff member they judged would be most likely to be interested and able to assist.

The way in which the domestic and maintenance staff chose to pass on selected bits of information to me and various other residents was interesting, and often nicely timed.

Various citizens of Creswick could be valuable sources of information which was handy for those running the residential college in their town. The townsfolk had generations of experience of the ways of the School. I set out to nurture good relations with the Hospital, Fire Brigade, Police, and the clergy, and this paid off in several ways during those years of change in the 1970s.

## **Open Days**

The annual Open Days were important opportunities for potential applicants to find out about what rules governed the student life at the School. There was no shortage of volunteers that weekend to show parents and sons around and to answer all questions. Answers and comments from students were far superior to anything staff might say.

Persons enquiring about the course throughout the year were invited to inspect the School and ask questions of staff and students during a weekend in the Spring. We did not go to a lot of effort with special displays, preferring to let parents and prospective students see us as we usually were. The staff encouraged prospective students to look through the bedroom-studies, the common rooms, and the billiard room with students as guides, while we occupied parents. This relieved the hopefuls of parental comments and competing questioning, and allowed them and their guides to talk frankly. An unexpected result of establishing Open Days was the habit of at least one member of the annual scholarship selection panel to demand 'Why not?' if the interviewee had not taken advantage of the opportunity to find out what life would be like at the School. All the same, when distance or sheer lack of transport had been an obstacle the interviewee was let down gently. The advice of Open Day guides apparently sometimes had extended to hints on handling the selection interview.

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## Visitors

Staff and students enjoyed showing visitors whatever interested them especially about our School.

A continual part of the Principal's role was to entertain visitors, on any day of the year. One's willingness to entertain was sometimes tried by peremptory requests to have two or more for lunch, in and out of term, especially as a convenient stop in a weekend jaunt of some permanent head of a department or other notable. For that purpose the School was an attractive place to come to. Only once did my wife dig in her toes, on a weekday during term, when she decided she would not forgo a community commitment in Ballarat. I told the Chairman it was not convenient to have him and the Minister that lunchtime, but he pulled rank and insisted they eat in the Principal's residence. He would not agree to eat in the School dining room, with the students nor by ourselves after them. My wife left a good luncheon for us, but it got away to a quiet start when the Chairman realised my wife was off the scene. Under the circumstances I excuse my forgetting to take the homemade cassata out of the deep freeze before we sat down. I served it up anyway after the casserole, but neither guest could break it, and they left the slowly thawing wedges on their plates. Coffee and mints retrieved the situation a little. It was one occasion when the Chairman did not thank us for our hospitality. The Minister, I fancied I could twig from the hint of a nod he gave me, comprehended what had gone on. He visited the School at least once a year and was a shrewd observer.

Fortunately my wife enjoyed making visitors welcome and liked to feed them well. My annual allowance for entertaining was \$150, and by 1974 I ventured to apply for an increase, citing the amounts in my tax returns that had been accepted by the taxation office: \$176 for 1970-71, \$205 for 1971-71, \$310 for 1972-73, and in excess of \$1200 for 1974 when there had been a succession of protocol and security visitors before The Prince of Wales came to stay. Of course, the amounts I felt secure in claiming were less than actual expenditure. The response was less supportive than we had hoped. From memory the allowance was increased to \$250.

In May 1969 I purchased a visitors' book and the entries in it remind us of enjoyable times.

From time to time visitors came to mark a special occasion. In 1975, representatives of Legacy from Melbourne and Ballarat-Creswick gathered to witness a foundation member of Legacy unveil a plaque by a small Lone Pine, very soon after we had planted it in the arboretum, almost 60 years after the Gallipoli landing. Two of the School staff and two students made up the party. The brass plaque had been fixed to a concrete block the day before by one of the legatees, Creswick's monumental mason, who was at the ceremony. The Courier published an item about the tree the same week, and it was not long after that vandals broke the top from the tree, and upset the block. Presumably the culprits were youths, one of whom could read. The specimen grew on after the setback, only a trivial one compared with Turkish shelling. Presumably the tree is still there.

In May 1974 the Premier, R J Hamer, made a visit to the School, during the students' term vacation, which changed its future. He, the Minister and the Chairman had lunch in our house, before and after which the Premier made a close inspection of the facilities and asked many questions. Later, I escorted him in his car through the School plantations and forest to the State Nursery. While there, the subject of funds for a concrete pedestrian bridge over Creswick Creek opposite the School horse paddock came up, and I was venturesome enough to advocate a laminated timber bridge as a better choice. The idea caught on, and in time a wooden bridge was erected. Tyalla 1976 records the construction of the 2.1m wide footbridge made of laminated beams of CCA treated pine, designed by the Shire Engineer to span 25.3m.

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The success of the day's inspections brought two other results, the Certificate courses and a visit by HRH The Prince of Wales, both that year. Apparently Prince Charles would be overnight near Euroa on a Saturday, and would have engagements in Ballarat on the Monday before returning to Melbourne that afternoon. The organisers did not wish to ask him to return to Government House for the Sunday night, and travel to Ballarat the next morning. Was there no suitable Government place, more or less between Euroa and Ballarat, to avoid having to choose between private houses where the Prince would be gladly received? Someone who had enjoyed my wife's cooking had an idea. A forestry school would be safe neutral ground. Several visits by the protocol and other officials later, the Prince of Wales stayed overnight in the Principal's residence. He arrived late in October about six on the Sunday. After a meal with our family, and certain officers and the president of the student council, eight in all, we attended a showing of the film *The Living Forest* in Tremeame House, before which staff and their partners and the students were presented to the Prince of Wales. An inspection of the forest zoology practical class after breakfast on the Monday, and off the party went to Ballarat, leaving us to mull over the event of the past 16 or so hours.

The School was visited by overseas individuals and groups in the 1970s. Four from the Forestry School at Bulolo, PNG, stayed a few days in 1975. An agriculturalist from Botswana did a specially devised course of reading, field trips and fieldwork, and assignments for six months under the aegis of a Commonwealth department. Short visits were made by many foresters, research scientists, and government representatives from overseas and Australia.

## Transport

In 1969 the Commission provided two 12-man buses for practical exercises, field inspections, sporting trips. They were Dodges, far better suited to our needs than VW minibuses, but their bodies had been made by coachbuilders near Melbourne to specifications dreamed up by the Commission's Transport Officer, and the buses looked homemade. They were sturdy, roomy and serviceable, except for the upswinging door to a cramped luggage compartment across the back. The open door resembled a horizontal blade waiting to scar the forehead of the unwary chap who walked around the rear of the bus.

The Transport Officer obtained a second-hand tachograph for each bus which scribed a record of the acceleration, road speed and braking of the bus. Every driver had to enter a log book and a weekly inspection of the daily paper discs could detect speeding, sudden braking and so on. One of the forestry lecturers copped the chore of holding the keys to the boxes, and maintaining the instruments and checking the records. On one occasion a student who was pulled over by a policeman was pleased the tachograph was working, for later inspection showed he had not been driving over the speed limit.

For longer field excursions it was a bit tough on the lecturer to be driver, guide and supervisor, and to be sprightly when greeting our hosts at the destination. When the combined second and third year classes, and their baggage, exceeded the capacity of the two Dodges we were allowed to charter a bus with driver for these combined excursions. The luxury of coach seating was enjoyed by all. The large bus served as a 'travelling classroom', especially if it was raining at one of the stops, where the local forester or researcher could expound effectively.

## Fieldwork

The end of Saturday fieldwork by Diploma students was the last of the changes to the School regime in the 1970s, and that did not happen at a time or in a way of my choosing.

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There was fieldwork on weekday afternoons for second-year and third-year students, with the exception of Wednesday which was for sports or an alternative activity approved by the Principal, and on Saturday mornings. The obligation of fieldwork on Saturdays started to become a tender point with the students. They asserted that they had more lectures and practical classes during the week than science students at universities, and they had to observe a quiet two hours in the evenings. Fieldwork from eight until noon halved the time available for sport or other pastimes on Saturdays, and wrecked the chance for a weekend away.

I tried to meet their growing discontent by approving more applications for weekend leave or leave for the day, especially to allow travel to a sporting fixture. A concern which I had if Saturday fieldwork were dropped, and which I aired with staff only, was the practicality of keeping the dining room open all weekend for whatever number of Diploma students chose to remain.

Absences from Saturday's breakfast without notice the day before by students who decided to sleep in on a Saturday was awful to contemplate. The Housekeeper and some of her staff could be touchy at the best of times, and the early start on a Saturday was not all that popular with the cook.

The students appeared to recognise that their fieldwork obligation was set in concrete until the Commission might decide otherwise. Their continued cheerful attendance on Saturday mornings was a credit to them. The resident staff who taught forestry subjects in the Diploma course worked regularly on Saturdays: they did not complain and were loyal to the prevailing rule.

In July 1977 the Students' Council requested that Saturday fieldwork be abandoned. The following day I put the case to Alan Threader, as persuasively as I could. He took a particular interest in the School, was the Commissioner on the selection panel that interviewed applicants every January, and was always willing to talk over a topic I might raise with him. He gave me a good hearing, agreeing that times had changed, but he could not agree to support the students' request. He reminded me that students were selected for the course after an interview to help decide whether they were willing to see through three years which included a solid practical component. [Of course an applicant for a scholarship offering so many advantages would voice enthusiasm for Saturday work.] He observed that Saturday fieldwork was stressed at Open Days and otherwise. The present curriculum required that first-year students have at least half a day a week on fieldwork, and Saturday was the only time available, unless Wednesday sport were to be abandoned. His adamant reply meant it would be counterproductive to follow the conversation with a written recommendation, at least for some time.

The students had for some time contrasted their situation with that of the Certificate students, who worked for various Victorian government agencies, who came to the School for block study for one to three weeks at a time. They were free at the weekend, and watched the routines of the Diploma students with critical interest, and sometimes with a little amusement.

One Friday I came back from a day in head office, early in the evening. There were no signs of the usual activities for that time, the place was strangely quiet. The students had decided to walk out on fieldwork the next morning, and only their representatives remained, to see me to explain what they had done. We sat in the comfort of the living room of the Principal's house, and my wife provided hot drinks and some food to occupy us while we talked, calmly and not for long: they had been waiting for me to arrive before heading off themselves, and I wanted them to get well on their way before it was late. Those students who were chosen or who had volunteered to tell me were level-headed, responsible young men. I respected their courtesy and I still wonder whether they believed I had tried to rid them of Saturday fieldwork.

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The students had come up with a masterstroke that did not involve much risk, for there was safety in solidarity. Had the Commission decided to discipline them any publicity would almost certainly have reflected poorly on its operation of the college in a way no longer generally acceptable.

When I telephoned the staff rostered for Saturday duty they did not seem startled by the news. The Diploma staff were tight-lipped about the coup, and I decided I would not ask whether they had much or any forewarning. The advice given to me by a bishop occurred to me: 'when in doubt, do nothing'. The staff quickly revised the timetable with no fuss, and I have reason to believe that the students respected us for the way we handled the situation.

The activities called fieldwork changed over the years, of course. From 1940 until 1945 it included charcoal production for munitions. Until oil was used for heating and cooking in the School kitchen, and for heating and hot water in A V Galbraith House, the students spent a good deal of fieldwork time cutting, carting, benching and distributing firewood for use in stoves and fireplaces. The total time on firewood dropped from 25 per cent of total hours in 1965 to eight per cent in 1972, when, say, six per cent was primarily hardwood thinning rather than production work. By 1977, an abnormal year because of the fire in February, firewood cutting was two per cent of total hours, to supply the remaining fireplaces at the School.

The time spent on developing and maintaining Koala Park and various small reserves, such as an orchid reserve in the hardwood forest (proposed by the students), was respectively two, seven and nine per cent of total hours in the three years for which I have records. Again, 1977 required abnormal attention to wooden footbridges and other structures in Koala Park. During that year, roughly 20 per cent of general activities in the School forest were 'post-fire'.

The time spent on buildings dropped from about 10 to one per cent over the 12 years, because the Commission agreed to fund maintenance staff and contractors to do the work instead.

Most pleasing, fieldwork time was used more and more for practical exercises and assignments in a subject of study: 1965, 14 per cent; 1972, 29; and 1977 50 per cent of total hours. If a student wanted some fieldwork time to follow up a personal interest which was not strictly in a syllabus he or she was allowed reasonable time for that.

So, 'fieldwork' came to embrace a range of activities quite different from former times.

Practical work at the State Nursery at Creswick had ceased to be a part of fieldwork some years earlier. The work done was routine help with whatever seasonal tasks were on the go, and the group of students had become more nuisance to the nursery staff than help to get work done. A disadvantage was that students did not get to know small native tree and shrub species by sight. I introduced a 'Tree of the Week' by displaying a tubed or potted seedling on the wide sill of the library window near the dining room for the first three days of the working week, then adding a label identifying it for four days. The overseer at the nursery used to give me three or four specimens and labels at a time, and I kept the spares behind my house. After display we planted the specimens somewhere on the School property. Tree of the week was useful; over a year passers-by could become familiar with the features of about 30 seedling eucalypts and other forest species.

The following tables indicate the activities which comprised fieldwork in 1965, 1972 and 1977 (the year of the fire).

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**Table 1 - 1973 Analysis of 1965 and 1972 School Years**

<b>Analysis of Fieldwork Hours by Diploma Students</b>	<b>1965 (% of hrs)</b>	<b>1972 (% of hrs)</b>
Practical exercises in forest mensuration, surveying, etc.; vacation project reports <sup>1</sup>	14	29
Librarian duties	2	6
Hardwood forest: - Koala Park, other reserves - Patrol, general activities	2 5	7 5
Firewood cutting and distribution	25	8 <sup>2</sup>
Pine plantations	18 <sup>3</sup>	10
School arboretum and grounds	8	6
Workshops	6	2
Fire equipment	3	2
Truck, general carrying	3	8
School buildings	10	3 <sup>4</sup>
Structures, erection and repair	3	8 <sup>5</sup>
Miscellaneous, including absence	1	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

This analysis conforms with work definitions written in 1965.

**Notes**

1. Excursions omitted.
2. Four-fifths of this item was primarily a hardwood thinning exercise, not production cutting
3. Includes log and pulpwood preparation and measurement
4. Decrease due largely to elimination of routine cleaning by students, and to increased employment of contract labour for maintenance and repairs
5. Reflects drainage works, conversion of woodshed to workshop, painting buildings.

**Table 2 – Analysis of 1977 School Year (% of Hours)**

<b>Related almost entirely to one subject of study</b>	<b>Activities in School Forest</b>		<b>Assignments in subject of study</b>	<b>Activities Outside the School Forest</b>	<b>%</b>
	Botany, ecology, entomology, zoology	11		Botany (herbarium and working on fresh material)	4
	Mensuration, surveying	7		Forest economics	1
	Silviculture, forest soils, forest pathology	8		Fortran programming	1
	Fire protection	4		Wood technology	2
	Forest engineering	2	<b>General practical experience</b>	Small group discussions, individual projects, library practice	6
	Forest products, wood technology	5		Receiving tuition in the use of library	2
<b>General Activities</b>	Fencing, road maintenance patrols	7		Report writing	1
	Erection and maintenance of signs, construction or demolition of structures	7		Building maintenance, workshop practices	1
	Guiding visitors, other information services	2		Development and maintenance of School arboretum	2
	Maintenance and cleaning of vehicles	1		Labouring, new drainage and sewage plant trenches	3
	Receiving safe working instruction, use and maintenance of forest tools	5		Landscaping projects, community service	1
	Development and management of Koala Park and other reserves	9	<b>Total</b>		<b>24</b>
	Landscaping projects	1			
	Miscellaneous tasks	7			
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>			

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## Summer Camp

The senior class went into camp for three weeks in January under the supervision of a member of staff, to tackle a project germane to the forest at hand. Summer camp was introduced in the 1950s, inspired by the custom of camps for forestry students in USA. They were started by the Principal who was Chairman of the Forests Commission for much of the time I was in charge of the School. In former times it had been usual for students to be posted, usually in pairs, to a forest district for work experience in January after their first and second years.

In my view these summer camps were merely transplants of VSF life to some other forest location in the State, contrived to occupy the class, and perhaps staff. They did not have the same function as the North American camps, which brought together the members of a class who did not know each very well, and who had not had the benefits of regular practical exercises during their first and second years with their peers. For them summer camp was a novel shared experience.

After two years at the School the members of our senior class would better preface their final year with experiences as individuals in forest districts and research centres, fitting in with the local staff and forest licensees. Back at the School during term they could perhaps exchange information and anecdotes about their vacation work experiences.

The worth of the camp projects (timber stand assessments, site appreciation surveys, pine growth studies, and so on) had been overtaken by the effectiveness of practical fieldwork during the year. The students already had the team and technical skills which a camp project could promote.

I had had my share of supervising summer camps in the 1960s, devising their projects, and slogging through the report-writing with students afterwards, and I wanted to relieve the staff of a similar burden in January when they would be better off spending the time with their families, for the chore of summer camp supervision for ten days or so cramped the chances of a lecturer taking recreation leave to spend with his family. As Principal, I spent enough of January dealing with the business of applications and interviews for the new intake, and overseeing annual maintenance of accommodation at the School, to bow out of attending camp.

Eventually our sustained case to replace summer camp with individual work experience in selected forest districts was accepted, with the heartfelt approval of the students.

## Vacation Work

Students who had completed their first year were required to work in January for at least three weeks of the long vacation, a useful source of field experience and cash. The School negotiated this employment to suit, as far as practicable, the preferences of individuals. Because the School budget stood the basic costs of employment it was not hard to place students. Those students who wanted work in their second long vacation and in term vacations were also found jobs, at the expense of the host forest district or research station.

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## Fire

Saturday 12 February 1977 started as a warm summer's day and ended with Creswick and the adjacent forest and pine plantations shrouded in smoke hanging from fire that raged in from grasslands to the north in the early afternoon.

The School year was about to begin, and the new students were expected to arrive the next day. I was up and about before sunrise that Saturday, attending to some office work and making my own preparations for their arrival and the return of the others.

Our daughter was playing tennis at Hyde Park and my wife and I were finishing lunch when the town's fire siren sounded. The afternoon was windy, not good for firefighting. The fire was in paddocks well out of Creswick, but I filled some knapsack pumps with water and placed them in the back of the School station wagon, just in case.

Not long afterwards our daughter came home, saying the tennis had been abandoned owing to the fire. Fresh smoke was in the air and obviously the fire front was getting close. I thought the best thing to do was to drive to the District office to find out what was doing, and took our 18-year-old daughter with me.

A crew of firefighters was tumbling out of a bus from Daylesford as we stopped by the office. The first smoke from the rapidly-advancing fire was swirling past us in the yard; the wind had got up and the fire front had advanced on Creswick much faster than information about its progress. The prospects were grim. I decided I must go back to the School but the fire was then a few metres off the direct track back, and I managed to turn and retreat to the nursery just as the flames roared across the track, into the corner of the scion garden planted up with selected stock of radiata pine. With headlights of the wagon full on I crawled along the main drive towards the Castlemaine Road, hoping not to encounter a fire truck. Abruptly we were in clear air at the sealed road, at the edge of the fire, and could return home through the town.

The next hour was an exciting test of the School's fire protection preparedness. The usual firelines had been raked clean by the students just before their vacation, and spoutings on buildings had been cleaned out. Over January the groundsman had raked up and removed any debris from trees.

My wife stayed to protect our house, and ran water into the bath as a last refuge. She handled telephone calls until the line failed. Later, she helped save the Semmens' house when she splashed out flames on its walls with cordial drink she had taken over for firefighters there.

Our firefighting force comprised our daughter and me, and two forestry staff and the groundsman who had come over to help. There was no brigade or other help in sight. We found that the mains water had failed. The two forestry staff who had turned up to help agreed to return to protect the houses they had built in Creswick, away from the School. That left three of us standing on Brackenbury Road with a knapsack pump of water on our backs, awaiting the erratic advance of the fire. Then came the confident voice of the groundsman, who announced with relieved satisfaction that the seasonal firelines, cleared ground around the 'cabins in the pines', and the close mowing of green and dry grass was paying off. Our feeling of relief was set back when the plantation of Corsican pines on the rise above exploded and was engulfed in fierce fire. The radiated heat from the pines made an observer at the rear door of Tait's store, over the creek in Albert Street, turn her face away. The fire had passed and was burning to the south - time for our groundsman to look to his own house further over on Eastern Hill. The two of us who remained squirted the base of a couple of fence posts which were smouldering, and dampened down some very small hot spots

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outside the School grounds, and the patrolled around the main buildings, looking particularly for smoke around eaves and bargeboards on the original main building.

An observer patrolled that night lest an ember high on a building cause a fire.

There was no sufficient reason to delay the arrival of the new students. Although the desolate scene seemed to make some parents quite concerned at leaving their son or daughter in such a place, the newcomers took it in their stride with one exception. Within two days one of the women asked to be excused from her bonded traineeship, and the Commission readily agreed to release her.

The scorched forest and plantations provided different opportunities for field surveys of one kind and another. Work in the School forest and Koala Park during 1977 focused on repair and restoration.

## **Goodbye Creswick**

In 1978 I was posted to head office, into a new position of Chief Forest Education Officer. I had not expressed a wish to leave the School, but I was alerted by the Chairman to look for a vacancy to be advertised in the January in "Victorian Public Service Notices". He said he wanted me to apply. I knew I had no more to offer the School and a change might suit me well. No promotion was involved: I well remember asking the Chairman, in a relaxed moment, to increase my salary by one lousy dollar a year, so I could say I had been promoted to Melbourne. He did not even regard it as a jest. The salary had gone up to \$22,380 since the beginning of 1969.

We vacated residence R7 on 21 April 1978. My teaching association with the School continued until the end of the final term. There was no one on the resident staff available to pick up the lecturing and practical classes of wood technology. I felt a strong obligation to the class, and suggested I saw the year out. The Principal accepted the offer, and the Chief of the Division agreed. I was given the use of an uncomfortable small car from the head office pool, to make day trips to Creswick. There were times I wondered why I was driving it at five o'clock on a winter's morning, or after eight that evening and not quite home, without demanding a more suitable car.

At the end of the year I had the pleasure of escorting the occasional speaker, Dr Margaret Blackwood, to the prize-giving at the School, this time sharing the back seat of an air-conditioned car I had requisitioned driven by one of the Commission's drivers. She had been a popular teacher of plant genetics at The University, and we forestry students remembered her breezy and kind manner with affection. That day marked the end of my direct association with the School.