

# Highlights of the AustralAsian Annual Meeting

**Beechworth, 17-22 September**

by Morris Lake #7634

All who attended this meeting will agree to one thing. This was a great meeting, a time of joy and sharing, and a bucket-full of memories for the 41 members who attended—no overseas visitors this time. Graham Trost, from NZ, was planning to come, but at the 11th hour his splendid pine plantation—the canopy of which we had ‘dined under’ during the Christchurch meeting—was devastated by a severe storm only days before he was due to fly out, necessitating a huge recovery program on his part. He did send his apologies plus, several shots of the uprooted and smashed remains of his forest, which were projected onto the screen for all to see. Our commiserations and thoughts were with him. Nature can reveal its cruel side as well as its majesty, unfortunately for some.

Harry and Esther Dennis and their willing team welcomed members as they arrived, some on Sunday, but most on Monday. Those of us who had driven considerable distances, came in bright sunshine, however the clouds soon closed in and the temperatures dropped for the first two days; with the outdoors program put on hold and we all gathered indoors—which as you can imagine was no real problem, since we now had time to ‘chew on the fat’ to our hearts content, and many of the indoor programs were bought forward. Tuesday we boarded the bus for the first outing to visit the wide range of fascinating fascinating historic and woody sights.

## Myrtleford Phoenix Tree

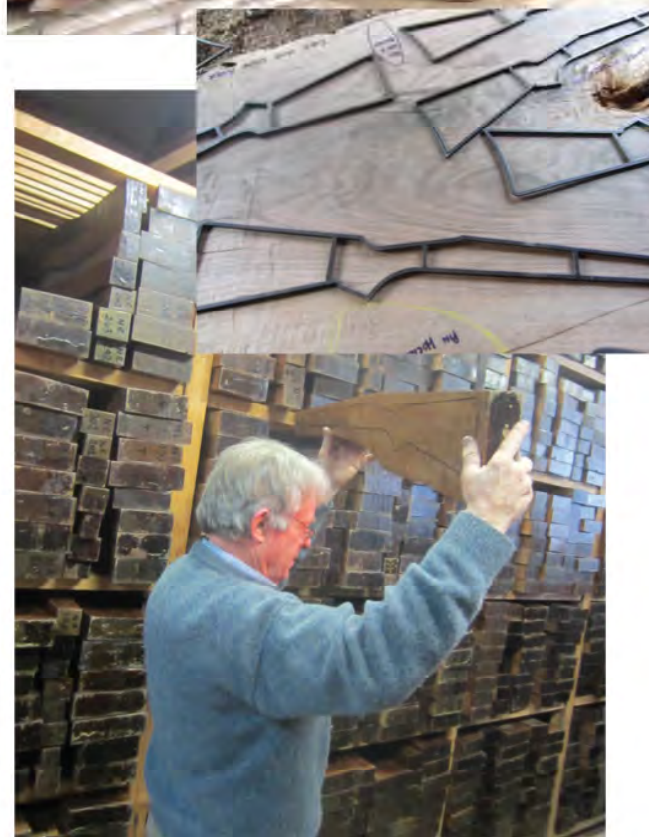
The Myrtleford Phoenix Tree in the main street of Myrtleford is a huge river red gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) sculpture by Hanz Nohs, which represents the mythical Phoenix bird rising to life. As seen below it is covered to keep the sun off.



*The Myrtleford Phoenix Tree.*

## Porepunkah Rifle Stocks

We then proceeded to Porepunkah where we were entertained by Roger Vardy—and when I say ‘entertained’, I mean it. This is a two man company and Roger is the owner of V&W Rifles, which manufactures and exports rifle stocks for non-military guns. Their market is world wide. The business occupies a disused sawmill and sources mostly *Juglans regia* (Persian/English walnut) and *Juglans nigra* (northern black walnut) from the many aged walnut trees found in commercial plantings as well as gardens and parks. It is obvious he will go anywhere to source walnut. We were shown piles of slabs—stacked in order for book matching and identified and recorded. We were also shown an example of laying out the templates in order to produce the best stocks. Roger indicated that there is a great deal of wastage in order to produce top quality stocks. He also took us into his padlocked storage room containing a huge number of cut stocks ready for production.



## Mt Buffalo National Park

Mt Buffalo National Park, is a sub Alpine “Island” plateau of granite massif first sighted and named by the famous explorers Hume and Hovell in 1824. The highest point is The Horn at 1721 m (5,646 ft). This important botanical landmark was first explored in 1853 by Ferdinand Mueller, who was accompanied by John Dallachy, both of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. This was Mueller’s, later to become Baron von Mueller, first plant-collecting expedition as colonial botanist to Governor La Trobe. By 1868, Mueller’s herbarium collection totalled something close to 350,000 species—importantly this included mostly ‘type’ specimens which are still held in the Melbourne Herbarium.

I don’t know about you, but that certainly makes my 3,000 something wood collection rather ‘piddlin’, if you don’t mind the expression—and having dwelt for some time now on the significance of that one simple fact, I must declare a much enhanced respect for the Honourable gentleman von Mueller.

The second significant fact of Mount Buffalo for me is that geologically, its origin was around 360 million years ago when the original granitic magma was thrust up through existing sedimentary rock. This is relatively recent really, and comes just before the breakup of Gondwana when this eastern edge of Australia was being thrust eastward, in its journey across the great Tethys Ocean to where it now rests, and Australia’s east coast was starting to climb up on what is now known as the Pacific plate—which was subducting under the Australian continent. It is also at the most southern end of the major fault line of the Great Dividing Range.

As we came up the mountain the change to granite was abrupt and there were sudden changes in tree species. We saw *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* (ribbon gum), and *Eucalyptus mitchelliana* (Mt Buffalo gum), which is found only on Mt Buffalo. We also saw *Eucalyptus radiata* (narrow-leaved peppermint), which following fire, will produce regrowth from the canopy, compared to others that will regrow from epicormic tissue in the stem, or from tillers, as in Mt Buffalo gum.



View from Mt Buffalo.

We also saw *Acacia obliquinervia* (mountain hickory wattle) and *Eucalyptus mannifera* (brittle gum) in the break between the sedimentary and granitic rocks. As well as *Acacia phlebophylla* (Buffalo sallow wattle), *Leptospermum micromyrtus* (button tea tree), *Eucalyptus pauciflora* (snow gum), and at about 1,000 (~3,280 ft), *Eucalyptus delegatensis* (alpine gum, photo below) becomes dominant.



Mt Buffalo Chalet. Unfortunately now not in operation.

## AustralAsian AGM 2013

The Annual General meeting was chaired by David Munzberg who did a great job, and thanks also to Robin Lake as minutes recorder. A summary of some of the matters decided at that meeting is as follows.

In his introduction David noted that we had no overseas visitors; however there was a great contingent from Western Australia who came the furthest. He welcomed past AustralAsian Trustees who included Ian McLaughlin, Eugene Dimitriadis, Morris Lake, and himself.

David also congratulated the fantastic team who had put this meeting on, including Harry and Esther Dennis, Doug and Heather Maslem, Peter Stone, Laurie and Lillian Keyhoe, plus all the guest speakers.

David also noted the death of two of our members in the last year; Keith 'Unk' Beckman and Barry Black, a past Trustee.

Morris Lake noted that he had relinquished his editorship of *World of Wood* and *Down Under*, now edited and produced by Peter Simpson—who is doing a fantastic job. Morris encouraged members to contribute to the *World of Wood* to keep up the Australian content, and to continue to help Peter with articles and news for *Down Under*.

David encouraged members to send greeting to Graham and Judith Trost and their son, Parnell following the devastating storm that damaged their pine plantation.

There was discussion regarding the reprinting of Membership Brochures and a reminder to members that recruitment is up to individual members to sell IWCS. Brian Davis delivered his final report as Trustee and acknowledged the huge amount of work that has been done by Ian McLaughlin, and Harry and Esther Dennis on the Dadswell Collection, and for the work of many others.

It was then time for the appointment of a new AustralAsian Regional Trustee for 2013-2016. Ian McLaughlin nominated Harry Dennis. This was seconded by Charles Broadbent and there being no further nominations, Harry was elected unanimously.



*Handing over of the baton from Brian Davis to Harry Dennis, the newly elected AustralAsian Region Trustee.*

The financial statement was presented and there was some discussion before its acceptance, which was moved by Charles Broadbent, seconded by Morris Lake, and carried unanimously. It was noted that the individual state representatives had not made any claims for 'out of pocket expenditure'. They were encouraged to submit an amount for proposed budgeting for the coming year. There was discussion regarding the raising of our regional membership fees from \$55 to \$60, however the motion was defeated and it was therefore resolved that the fees remain the same.

A motion was passed that members who wish to receive *Down Under* by email are to notify Peter Simpson, and he will commence that service with the next issue.

There was discussion about the problems with the cost and decline in attendance at the *Working with Wood*

*Shows* and our need to promote to a wider Australian audience. We acknowledged the outstanding work of Brian Fraser as Membership Secretary, and this was carried with acclamation.

### Wood Auction

The Auction, conducted by David Munzberg, and a fabulous team, and which contained 380 items, returned the grand total of \$3,512.

### Goldsack Bequest Auction

The returns from the silent auction of this bequest totalled \$1,837.



*Esther and Harry Dennis with Brian and Pam Davis.*

## Lucas Sawmill Visit

A very popular visit was to the Wooragee Lucas Mill factory where the famous Lucas portable sawmills are manufactured. This is a small family business and we were met and shown through the mill by Warren Lucas, son of the founder. But before I start I want to share with you some of their story, plus a few thoughts which will bring the true significance of this very successful sawmill concept into focus. The Lucas family have been farmers since their Grandfather settled on their current property and started to make their living from sheep and in recent times, cattle. The property also had millable timber and so they started to harvest, mill, and market their timber. They started with a bench saw but eventually came to the realisation that hauling and manhandling logs to a central point for milling had 'hairs on it'. So they set about to build a portable mill which they could take to the fallen log.

The result was the Lucas Mill, of which there are now 14,000 machines in use on every continent of the world—in modest sheds which have 'grown like topsy' as they progressed. They now produce a circular saw mill, with slabbing, planing and stone cutting attachments available. The true marvel of this machine is that all the components of this revolutionary mill can be transported on a tray-back utility to the log and be assembled by one person. It is capable of cutting logs up to a diameter of five feet (1.5 m) and 47 feet (~14.3 m) long. Thousands of Lucas sawmills are now being used in every continent of the world to mill trees where they are felled and cut into lumber—lumber which can be carried out of the forest with a minimum of devastation to the natural environment of the forest. Nothing which is heavier than one person can carry is taken either into, or out of the forest. This represents a revolution in forest management and is making it possible for small enterprise operations, with very low capital outlay, to sustainably harvest and market lumber.



*Warren Lucas addressing the group.*



*Warren showing partly assembled mills and demonstrating the mill in use.*



**Kevin and Lynne Williams**  
**Violin maker and restorer and IWCS member**

It was great to visit Kevin and Lynne again at their home at Wooragee and to see that he is back working after serious health problems affected the use of his arms. His workshop is a wonderland of old and famous violins and such. During our visit to his workshop he shared with us the intricate details of determining the provenance of 'possibly' ancient and famous, or fake, violins as they are presented to him to return them to use. The last time most of us had caught up with Kevin, was when he was collecting and testing Australian outback timbers to establish their suitability for the construction of stringed instruments, and 'riling' against music authorities who still applied 'traditional' values to the trade of instrument making—at the exclusion of new information.

I doubt that the drawbridge has been raised, despite his obvious recognised skills and ability to both repair and make beautiful stringed instruments—as we could see from his current accomplishments.

Kevin, we salute you and wish you the best of health into the future and we are proud to have you a member of our 'mob'.



**The Hovell Tree, Albury NSW**

The picture on the right shows the historic Hovell Tree which was inscribed by the famous explorer William Hovell on the 17 November, 1824. The Hume and Hovell expedition was one of the most important journeys of explorations undertaken in eastern Australia. In 1824 the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Thomas Brisbane, commissioned Hamilton Hume and former Royal Navy Captain, William Hovell to lead an expedition to find new grazing land in the south of the colony, and also to find an answer to the mystery of where New South Wales's western rivers flowed. Surveyor General John Oxley asserted that no river could fall into the sea between Cape Otway and Spencer's Gulf, and that the country was 'uninhabitable and useless'. In 1824, newly appointed Sir Thomas Brisbane, who disbelieved this statement, offered to land a party of prisoners near Wilson's Promontory and grant them a free pardon, as well as a grant of land, to those who found their way overland to Sydney. On 6 November, Hume and Hovell and their party came in sight of the snow-covered Australian Alps. Then later they came upon a very rich country, abounding in kangaroos and other animals, with frequent tracks of aborigines; and on Tuesday, 16 November, they arrived suddenly on the banks of a "fine river".

Mr. Hume was the first to see the river, near the site of Albury and named it "the Hume," (now the Murray River) after his father. This place is called the 'Crossing Place' where Hovell carved his name into this tree on the 17 November 1824, before crossing into Victoria.



The Hovell Tree  
river red gum  
(*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*)

