

BUILDING A FOREST CONSCIENCE

by
Libby Robin



*An Historical Portrait
of the
Natural Resources
Conservation League of Victoria
(NRCL)
1944 — 1990*

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I am grateful to the support of the League’s present Director, Les Schultz, and to all those involved in the League in the present or the past who gave their time to discuss details of the history with me, including Evelyn Clifton, Brian Craig, Lance Edgar, Charles Elsey, Lewis Godfrey, Dewar Goode, Peter Jones, ‘Matt’ Mathews, Peter Rendle, Bill Thwaites and Joyce Wilkie. Edna Smith generously assisted with papers and memories of her father, Cyril Isaac. I wish particularly to acknowledge the warm encouragement of Bill Grauer, and to thank him for his good suggestions based on meticulous readings of drafts of this history. Any errors or misinterpretations are, of course, entirely my responsibility.

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Libby Robin
Melbourne
November 1990

PART I

Introduction

HISTORICAL ROOTS

The Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria was initially established as the Save the Forests Campaign in 1944 before incorporating under its present title late in 1951.

For this *Historical Portrait* of the League, I have organised material into two major parts.

Part I, Historical Roots, begins with a chapter examining the society in which the Save the Forests Campaign was established, as well as looking at many of the Campaign's early activities in detail.

Present-day Australians can easily forget that planting and nurturing trees has not always been part of our culture. Many early European settlers of this country were "tree haters".¹ (See Note 1, p. 115). Trees were a nuisance to be cleared to make room for building and farming. The forests appeared inexhaustible and at times oppressive. The settlers yearned for a civilised (European) landscape of cleared pastoral and agricultural land.

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that a few senior officials and professionals realised that the supply of good timber was not after all limitless. By the early decades of the twentieth century, forestry professionals were seeking ways to tackle the major enemy of forests: fire. Judge Stretton's reports on Royal Commissions made key members of the Victorian public aware that bush fires were not generally "acts of God", but rather the result of human carelessness or deliberation. The first chapter tells the story of how the Save the Forests Campaign was established to "build a forest conscience" in all Victorians.

The second chapter of the book is a biographical sketch of the League's founder, Cyril Everett Isaac. Many people have fostered the League's development over the years but Isaac's contribution was outstanding. His personal life story provides a context for many of the League's activities and programs.

Part II of the book, "Traditions", (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) examines the development of the League's Nursery, its Education programs and its Conservation activities. Part II is separately introduced on p. 37.

A brief Epilogue looks at the concerns of the League in the 1990s (pp. 101-103). For easy reference, an annotated "Chronology" is provided (pp. 105-114). Notes on sources are on pp. 115-127.

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Chapter 1

The Beginnings: The 'Save the Forests' Campaign 1944-1951

The 'Save the Forests' Campaign is of a character that almost eludes definition. It most refreshingly does not seek to control, to direct, to regulate or to dictate. It has nothing to gain but has a great deal to give ...

... For want of a better definition of this unusual thing, I have thought of it as an Idea-become-active. At its birth it was a grand idea. It is rapidly becoming a strong, beneficent and educative movement. I, with great respect, commend it as already of vast national importance, and wish it continued success in its truly democratic development of its unobtrusive influence. Its story is worth more than a casual glance."

... (Judge) Leonard E B Stretton, Preface to *An Inseparable Trinity*, published in 1950 by the 'Save the Forests' Campaign.

The 1939 Fires and Royal Commission

Judge Stretton wrote these words eleven years after he completed his report on the Royal Commission into the fires of January 1939, which he described as "the most disastrous forest calamity the State of Victoria (had) known". Fire swept across the State. The biggest area burnt extended from around Warburton, just east of Melbourne continuously to the Murray River near Corryong, taking with it most of Victoria's best mountain ash forests. Seventy-one people died. Many small mountain townships were devastated by the fires and never resettled. Commissioner Stretton's most important finding was that the "fires were lit by the hand of man".¹ (See Notes p. 115).

Stretton's report focused on the obvious failure of the law which was designed to prevent fires. He argued that a law that was unpopular and misunderstood was virtually unenforceable. His interest in the 'Save the Forests' Campaign was that it tackled the most difficult aspect of fire prevention: community attitudes.

Stretton was aware that "the dull lecture form of education" was destined to failure.² What excited him about the Campaign was its capacity to foster goodwill and voluntary cooperation from professionals and the general public

alike. It sought to influence public opinion through publications, broadcasts, exhibitions and practical activities such as tree-plantings. People of all ages from both the country and city had been involved in the programs of its first six years. Its scope was broad and captured the multifaceted spirit of Stretton's original report. The "forests" that the Campaign sought to save were not mere repositories of timber, but were also valued as critical to the conservation of the State's water and soil.

Stretton's report aroused concern at the time of its publication in May 1939, but was quickly overshadowed by overseas events precipitating the Second World War, which Australia entered in September of that year. No specific action was taken immediately, but the issue of fire prevention was on the agenda of several voluntary organisations, industries and individuals, as well as the Forests Commission itself, pending the lifting of war-time restrictions.

The Australian Forest League

The Australian Forest League (AFL) was the organisation which in 1939 would have been the best equipped to promote new community attitudes to fire prevention. It was "a band of enthusiasts linked together in the national work of forest preservation" (in the words of the retiring President of 1920, Mr (later Sir) Russell Grimwade).³ It had begun in Victoria late in 1912 and since 1917 had published a journal, *The Gum Tree*, promoting the professional management of forests and forest resources. The AFL's initial most important achievement was to lobby successfully for the setting up of an independent Forests Commission in Victoria in 1918. In the 1920s and 1930s it had become a predominantly Victorian organisation, with some of the interstate branches closing, and the "national" organ, *The Gum Tree*, being unashamedly Victorian in bias. However, war-time paper restrictions had led to a scaling down of the attractively presented *Gum Tree* (which might have served to publicise forest protection in a form suitable for the general public), to a smaller *Quarterly Supplement*, which was little more than a newsletter for forestry enthusiasts. At the same time, lighting restrictions meant that evening meetings were impossible for a significant period.

By the time the AFT was reconstituted in November 1943, it had lost its momentum, a number of its key members being abroad on active service. The Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd (APM, through its Managing Director, Sir Herbert Gepp, offered financial assistance for the provision of a full-time secretary. In a proposal to the Melbourne Rotary Club, of which he was a member, Gepp called for public subscriptions to "revive and revivify" the Australian Forest League, by maintaining a "small energetic staff".⁴ The tinder-dry conditions leading up to the summer of 1943/44,

coupled with the concern for the young mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) regrowth after the 1939 fires (which was still too immature to set seed), lent urgency to the appeal, but it seems that the Australian Forest League was slow to act on Gepp's initiative. Perhaps the AFL also was seen as too narrowly a "forestry" organisation, where what was sought was an education program based on a very broad range of forest values.

Soil Conservation

It was not only foresters and those concerned with forest industries who took a professional interest in the destruction wrought by the 1939 fires. In September 1939, George T Thompson, a surveyor then working for the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWSC), addressed the



Sir Herbert Gepp, influential industrialist and architect of the 'Save the Forests' Campaign [Courtesy State Library of Victoria]

Victorian Institute of Surveyors on the subject "The Surveyor's Part in Combating Erosion". Soil erosion had been the subject of two Government inquiries in the 1930s but no large-scale action had been taken. Two months later a four-week symposium on "Soil Erosion" was organised at Kelvin Hall, Melbourne, by the Victorian Institute of Surveyors, and supported by the Institute of Engineers, the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, and the Institute of Foresters of Australia. The papers presented were published in a book, *Soil Erosion in Victoria*, which was circulated widely in Government departments. The importance of reforestation to both water and soil conservation following fires and agricultural clearing, was emphasised throughout the 25 papers presented at the symposium by Heads of Government departments, professional officers and land owners.⁵ Alfred V Galbraith, Chairman of the Forests Commission, noted that the 1939 fires

*"were of such terrific intensity that not only was the tree and scrub vegetation killed, but the humus cover and organic matter in the surface layers of the soil were completely destroyed, leaving a loose pulverized mineral surface exposed."*⁶

Alarming figures detailing the cost of reclaiming soil and water resources lost through forest clearing in Europe and America were also presented at the symposium.⁷

It was another year before the 1940 *Soil Conservation Act* was finally passed by Victorian Parliament, and a (very small) Soil Conservation Board created. Inadequate resources and the loss of staff to the demands of the war resulted in the new Board actually suspending activities for most of 1942, although some educational material was circulated to State Schools through the Education Department's *School Paper*. It was well into 1943 before the Soil Conservation Board (SCB) was able to tackle its charter to (amongst other things) "promote soil conservation". In August 1943 there were significant staff changes, including the appointment of George Thompson to the position of Deputy Chairman. The SCB was armed with new data on the effects of fire and grazing in water catchment areas in the Omeo area from the 1941 work of Maisie Fawcett (later Mrs Stella Carr), seconded from the University of Melbourne's Botany School to provide scientific documentation of the ecology of the area. Although it was some years before Fawcett's detailed work was published, her research indicated that over the years fires had significantly altered the delicate vegetational balance.⁸ This finding was of concern to water catchment users and mountain cattlemen alike. Thus the SCB had its own reasons for promoting fire prevention measures in the general community.

Inquiry into Forest Policy in Victoria

It was also in August 1943 that the Hon. Cyril E Isaac, MLC for South-Eastern Province in Victoria began a four-month intensive investigation into the conditions of forestry in Victoria. This culminated in a speech to Victorian Parliament, *Forest Policy*, on 1 December 1943. Isaac had a personal interest in his subject. Before his parliamentary career had begun, he had spent thirty years growing and distributing plants and "endeavouring to foster an interest in gardening and tree-planting", especially in Victorian State Schools.⁹ In his investigations he accompanied Forests Commission officers during inspections of forest areas throughout the State. He had also had discussions with Alfred Galbraith (Forests Commission), and Sir Herbert Gepp (APM). The specific concerns which he brought to the attention of Parliament included the following:

- the shortage of human resources at the Forests Commission to handle the adverse summer season expected in 1943/44
- the risk of new fires to immature ash regrowth
- the importance of fostering volunteer assistance in fighting fires
- the value of forests to water and soil conservation, as well as the importance of the timber industry to the Victorian economy.

He argued persuasively that "an intensive educational campaign to save the forests, in which every tree-lover takes part is an urgent necessity".¹⁰ His Parliamentary speech was followed on 17 December 1943 by a Forestry

Exhibition and meeting at the Lower Melbourne Town Hall sponsored by APM through Sir Herbert Gepp. But this event went unremarked, lost perhaps in the pre-Christmas rush, and attendance at the evening meeting was dismal. Isaac and Gepp were disappointed by this, but not daunted. Gepp proposed another meeting at his home, Cliveden Mansions in East Melbourne, on Monday, 10 January 1944. Isaac agreed to make personal contact with a number of people representing organisations which would support the cause, to urge them to attend a "Forest Policy" conference.

Wallaby Lodge (8-9 January 1944)

Isaac's contacts included John C Jessop, Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW), who lent his enthusiastic support to the Forest Policy conference. He extended an invitation to those who would be attending the conference to spend the preceding weekend at the MMBW's Conference Centre, Wallaby Lodge, situated in the Wallaby Creek catchment area, north of Melbourne, as guests of MMBW. Not all were able to attend, but Gepp, Isaac and Jessop were joined by Charles M Ewart (Commissioner of Forests), John S Owens (Assistant Curator of Parks and Gardens, Melbourne), George T Thompson (representing SRWSC), Neil H MacNeil (Headmaster, Wesley College, Melbourne), Alfred D Hardy (President, Australian Forest League), Andrew Arthur Hughes (MLA, Church



*Wallaby Lodge, site of the first meeting to plan the "Save the Forests" Campaign
[Courtesy MMBW]*

of Christ Minister and educational reformer) and Martin Hannah (former MLA for Collingwood, Orangeman and trade union activist).¹¹

The design for a broadly based organisation which enlisted public support for the conservation of forests, not only as sources of timber, but also for their other values, was shaped at this weekend. Each of the participants came with a different reason for wishing to stem destruction of the State's

forests, and with different expertise. As they wandered through the mature stands of ash (normally closed to the general public) which had been reserved unlogged for water catchment purposes and inspected areas damaged by the 1939 fires, the participants exchanged ideas and perspectives about forest management and conservation. Cyril Isaac crystallised these discussions in a document "Plan for Building a Public Forest Conscience through a Save the Forests Campaign", which he put to the meeting at Sir Herbert Gepp's home the next evening.¹²

Cliveden Mansions Forest Policy Conference (10 January 1944)

The Forest Policy Conference which received Isaac's paper was attended by nineteen key individuals representing various voluntary and professional bodies (including the ten who had attended the Wallaby Lodge weekend). The paper was accepted "in its entirety" and a Planning Committee elected to set up a public meeting to establish the "Save the Forests Campaign". The offices of the Soil Conservation Board were offered (by George Thompson) as a venue for the Planning Committee, who, filled with a sense of urgency, met on the Friday of the same week. A Public Meeting to inaugurate the Save the Forests Campaign was organised (through John Owens) for Thursday 27 January 1944 at the major venue of the Melbourne Town Hall.¹³



George T Thompson (1966) – Soil Conservation Board. President 1953/54 & 1972/73, Director 1962-1972 [NRCL archives]

The Foundation of the Campaign (27 January, 1944)

Five key speakers introduced the notion of conserving forests from different perspectives: Isaac Herbert Boas, MSc, Chief of CSIR's Forest Products Division, John Jessop (MMBW), George Thompson (as Acting Chairman of the SCB), Samuel J A Fripp (from the Chamber of Commerce, who delivered a paper prepared by Gepp), and Neil MacNeil (who spoke on Forests and Youth).¹⁴

Isaac, with his personal experience as a teacher, was almost certainly the

one responsible for ensuring that a professional educator was granted “star billing” along with those qualified to speak on the scientific and commercial management of forests. Stretton’s 1939 report had strongly advocated fire prevention measures being controlled by scientifically trained professional foresters. However, it was Isaac who recognised that the Campaign’s program would depend on successful educational strategies as well as sound forest management practices. Neil MacNeil, former Victorian Rhodes Scholar and a highly respected teacher, was there to ensure that the Campaign’s educational aims would be taken seriously.¹⁵

The meeting was chaired by Councillor David N McBride, Vice-President of the Municipal Association of Victoria. It followed a detailed agenda, which gave the opportunity to representatives of key organisations to participate in the formal proceedings necessary to ‘found’ the Save the Forests Campaign. Interested members of the general public could offer written suggestions to the Campaign Committee’s Honorary Secretary, but were not invited to speak at the meeting. This ensured a brisk and efficient inaugural meeting, whilst giving the Campaign the broadest possible electorate. A “Plan of Campaign” was formally adopted by the meeting setting the objectives as follows:

- *To arouse public interest in forestry and to enlist public assistance in preventing and in fighting bush fires this year.*
- *To build up an organisation that will ensure the **continuance of active public interest** in our forests.*
- *To take all possible action to ensure that the water, timber and soil resources of the State shall be fully conserved.”¹⁶*

Within weeks of the meeting, the founders’ worst fears about the severity of the summer season were confirmed and another forty-nine lives were lost in Victorian fires. Judge Stretton was called upon again to conduct another Royal Commission, this time into the fires which had started at Yallourn on 14 February 1944. Fire from surrounding forests had entered the open cut coal mine, blazed out of control, and the whole township had been threatened.¹⁷ Tragedies like this served to confirm the Campaign’s urgency and importance. By the time its second public meeting was held in November 1944, the work of the Campaign’s Council received a resounding endorsement and the Campaign was formally given public approval to continue.¹⁸

Early Supporters of the Campaign

The involvement of “Industry” through the efforts of Sir Herbert Gepp was critical to the Campaign’s independence from Government funding and expertise. Gepp chaired the original fundraising drive which raised £1605

"SAVE THE FORESTS" CAMPAIGN

THE Campaign has received widespread support. A full list of organizations having representation on the Campaign Council is given on page 4. An executive and various committees have been appointed to carry out special duties.

OBJECTIVES

1. To arouse public interest in forestry and to enlist public assistance in preventing and in fighting bush and forest fires.
2. To build up an organization that will ensure the continuance of active public interest in our forests.
3. To take all possible action to ensure that the timber, water and soil resources of the State shall be fully conserved.

PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

The Campaign is primarily one of education. The means to be used include the following:—

1. **METROPOLITAN AND PROVINCIAL PRESS.** Reports, articles and items of interest will be supplied.
2. **WIRELESS.** Broadcasts will be arranged through the courtesy of National and Commercial stations.
3. **LEAFLETS.** Leaflets dealing with the objectives of the Campaign will be distributed, largely through participating organizations.
4. **FILMS AND SLIDES.** Films and slides showing aspects of forestry, fire-prevention and fire-control will be shown at picture theatres and at meetings.
5. **MEETINGS.** Public meetings will be held throughout the State. Short addresses will be given at meetings of assisting organizations where time is made available. The Campaign Council will assist with speakers, films, slides, charts, etc.
6. **PERSONAL CONVERSATION.** The Campaign Council will supply suggestions and information to help in personal conversation on all aspects of forestry.

Reports and publicity material concerning the Campaign will be sent to all Members of Parliament, to Municipal Councils, and to interested organizations. Special attention will be given to the education of youth.

CAMPAIGN COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

President: Cr. D. N. McBride, Vice-President of the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Vice-Presidents: Mr. J. C. Jessop, Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works; Sir Herbert Gepp, representing the Melbourne Rotary Club; Mr. T. R. Davey, Chairman of the Metropolitan Division of the Australian Natives' Association; Mr. A. D. Hardy, President of the Australian Forest League (Victorian Division).

Members: Mrs. Herbert Brookes, President of the National Council of Women; Mr. R. H. Croll, representing the Field Naturalists' Club; Cr. W. R. Warner, President of the Victorian Tree Planters' Association.

Honorary Organizer: The Hon. C. E. Isaac, M.L.C.

Honorary Secretary: Mr. J. S. Owens, Assistant Curator of Parks and Gardens, City of Melbourne.

Hon. Assistant Secretary and Secretary of Committees: Mr. A. L. Martin.

DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED ON COUNCIL

Forests Commission.

Education Department.

Department of Lands and Survey.

State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.

Soil Conservation Board.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works.

Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Australian Natives' Association.

Australian Forest League.

Aplarists' Association.

Bird Observers' Club.

Boy Scouts' Association.

Bush Fire Brigades Association.

Country Fire Brigades Board.

Country Women's Association.

Demobilised Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Association.

Field Naturalists' Club.

Girl Guides' Association.

Gould League of Bird Lovers.

Hardwood Millers' Association.

Housewives' Association.

Melbourne Chamber of Commerce.

Melbourne Rotary Club.

Municipal Association of Victoria.

National Council of Women.

National Safety Council.

Royal Automobile Club of Victoria.

Returned Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia.

State School Committees' Association of Victoria.

Timber Merchants' Association.

Timber Workers' Union.

Town and Country Planning and Resources Association.

University of Melbourne.

Victorian Broadcasting Network.

Victorian Chamber of Manufactures.

Victorian Federation of Mothers' Clubs.

Victorian Tree Planters' Association.

Offers of assistance or of financial support, by individuals or organizations, will be welcomed by the Council.

All communications should be addressed to J. S. Owens, Honorary Secretary, Save the Forests Campaign, c/o Town Hall, Melbourne.

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SAVE THE FORESTS
CAMPAIGN

(pounds) in March 1944, including a substantial donation of £550 (pounds) from APM, his own company. APM generously supported the staffing of the Campaign by paying the salary of a full-time Assistant Secretary, Arthur Lancelot Martin (seconded from APM).¹⁹ Independence from Government was also seen to be essential to the tackling of the Campaign's most challenging objective:

*"to induce Parliament through the pressure of informed public opinion, to take the necessary action to ensure in perpetuity, adequate supplies of timber and the maintenance of adequate forest cover."*²⁰

APM's generous support continued for the next twenty years, with an annual donation of £500 (pounds).

The opinions and support of private individuals were garnered through the affiliations of community service and special interest organisations such as the Country Women's Association (CWA), the Australian Natives' Association (ANA), and the Australian Forest League. The ANA had a long history of concern with forests and forest resources. It had supported the introduction of "Arbor Day" into State Schools throughout Victoria in 1904, "to foster forestry in the public mind". It was also the sponsor of many community tree-plantings. Australian eucalypts and acacias had been closely associated with the patriotic aims of the ANA. It had initiated the "Wattle Day" tradition on 1 September each year from 1911, the golden wattle being adopted as the national floral emblem.²¹

The Australian Forest League (Victorian Branch) (AFL) could have felt threatened by the Campaign. The promised funding and its potential full-time secretary (on secondment from APM) had been transferred to the new Campaign. However, the AFL's support for the Campaign was unstinting, probably because of Gepp's senior role in both bodies. Throughout the second half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s the *Quarterly Supplement* (renamed the *Gum Tree* again in 1950) regularly featured news items about the Campaign's activities and achievements, freeing the Campaign of the burden of producing a regular newsletter.²² The appointment of the AFL's Victorian President, Alfred Hardy, as a Vice-President of the Campaign's first Council ensured initial solidarity, but Cyril Isaac also went out of his way to continue to nurture the friendship. He attended the AFL's Annual Meeting in 1947, and paid tribute to its support of the Campaign. He also spoke about the important difference between the two organisations: the Campaign did not have 'individual membership', thus it could not be seen to be in competition with the AFL.²³ The *Gum Tree* also made a feature of Isaac's radio broadcasts on tree-planting, and Alfred Hardy wrote (and accepted electoral responsibility for) an editorial

urging AFL members to vote for Isaac at the election on 21 June 1952:

*"While our League is non-political, it is to political action we must often look when seeking advancement of our aims and at this juncture a word or two relative to this friend of the forests [Isaac] is surely not amiss."*²⁴

The Campaign's other great supporters were the Municipalities and Shires of the Local Government sector. Initially represented through the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Campaign soon received the support of individual Municipal Councils. The first of these was the Shire of Dandenong. Isaac



ASSEMBLING BEHIND SIGN BOARD



AWAITING SIGNAL TO PLANT



PANORAMIC VIEW OF PLANTING IN WOMEN'S BLOCK (Photo by courtesy of the "Sun")

The first Community Forest Planting at Dandenong in July 1944. [NRCL archives]

had been a Councillor there for many years, and presumably used his influence to obtain support for the Campaign's first Community Forest Planting, held in July 1944 and jointly sponsored by the Campaign and the Dandenong Shire Council. In 1945, eighty-six community planting projects were organised by the Campaign in consultation with local groups.²⁵

First Activities of the Campaign

The Campaign Council's first enterprise was the publication in March 1944 of a booklet entitled *Victorian Forest Facts*. Modelled on a Canadian publication (also entitled *Forest Facts*), it aimed to provide speakers and



Community Forest Planting, Mt. Martha, 1949 [Courtesy of Division of Forest Products – CSIRO]

writers “responding to the call for assistance by the Save the Forests Campaign Council [with] factual information regarding the salient features of the Forest situation in Victoria”.²⁶ The book was compiled by the Deputy Surveyor-General of Victoria, Charles Tate Clark, with the support of professional scientists from a range of disciplines. The book was not, however, merely a data bank of facts. It was concerned with consciously correcting “misconceptions” about forests, and with “raising a forest conscience” in a public still distracted by the demands of war. Amidst data about the number of “acres of Crown land and repurchased lands dedicated as ‘Forest’”, one finds statements such as:

“... There is a tendency amongst patriotic Australians to exaggerate the natural resources of Australia. In relation to its area, Australia is, in this respect, one of the poorest countries in the world.

“... Wood is a sinew of war and it is said that a very large proportion of the almost invaluable shipping space crossing the

Atlantic from Canada to England in the face of submarine warfare is taken up with timber. Forests in Occupied Countries in Europe are being denuded to feed the Nazi war machine and there is likely to be a world shortage of accessible timber in the immediate post-war period.

*"... School forestry is now a definite part of the curriculum of the Education Department and we cannot give it too much encouragement and support ... The pupils gain much from their unselfish work and develop capacity for effort in the faithful performance of a big task. They render national service by labouring long and patiently for an objective which will bring immense benefit to the generation of boys and girls succeeding them."*²⁷

A very strong sense of the moral worth of forests and forestry emerges from the book along with the "Forest Facts". The consciences of many 'good citizens' and 'patriots' were deliberately pricked, and their numbers swelled the ranks of the Campaign's supporters, along with those professionally concerned with the resource values of forests.²⁸

Community tree-plantings built on this goodwill. In 1945 and 1946, a time of post-war reconstruction, 105,000 trees were distributed through the Campaign and planted by voluntary workers. The generosity of the Forests Commission in donating most of the young trees did not go unremarked by the planters, and assisted the Commission's own bid for public support in the management of the State's forests.²⁹

The Campaign's first year of operation culminated with a major Forestry Exhibition held at the Melbourne Town Hall from 27 November to 3 December 1944, attended by 10,000 people. Of the visitors, 6,000 paid to attend whilst 4,000 were schoolchildren, admitted free.³⁰

In 1944 the Victorian State Government finally passed a Bill which enacted Stretton's 1939 recommendation concerning the establishment of a central fire-fighting Authority. The Country Fire Authority (CFA) drew on the expertise of the Country Fire Brigades Board (an urban based body, established in 1891) and the Bush Fire Brigades Committee (a rural organisation, established in 1936). The CFA had its first meeting in April 1945.³¹

Regional Activities

The activities of the Campaign's first year were confined predominantly to the metropolitan area, apart from radio broadcasts which reached a wider audience. The second year, 1945, however, saw the spread of the Campaign to rural Victoria through District Committees. By 1946 there were 69 of

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As she tries to plant the tree's birthday

OVER 1500 TREES PLANTED BY 600 PEOPLE TO BE USED AS MODEL FOR STATE C.W.A. CEREMONY AT GORDON PARK

AN HISTORIC OCCASION IS THE ONLY WAY TO DESCRIBE THE PLANTING OF TREES IN THE CHARLTON COMMUNITY FOREST ON THE WOODBROOK WATER RESERVE ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 22. IT WAS A REMARKABLE SIGHT TO SEE YOUNG AND OLD FROM TOWN AND DISTRICT WENDING THEIR WAY TO THE ASSEMBLY POINT AT GORDON PARK AFTER THE SUN HAD BOUNDED A WARNING AT 1.30 P.M. THE STREETS WERE GAY WITH BUNTING AND EVERYONE WAS IN HIGH SPIRITS DESPITE THE DULL SKY AND BITING WIND. AT 2 P.M. THE SHOPS WERE CLOSED TO ALLOW BUSINESS PEOPLE TO ATTEND. THE ORDERLY MARCHING BY THE SCHOOL CHILDREN, AS THEY TOOK THEIR PLACES UNDER THEIR RESPECTIVE BANNERS, WAS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO THE MILLING CROWD.



C.W.A. President plants tree to commemorate Prince Elizabeth's birthday



Beginning of March Field in Gordon Park.

When planning the project, Mrs. C. F. Lane, R.E.C. Executive Officer at First Theological Seminary, along with the Charlton Association, had the idea of a tree-planting ceremony. The first tree-planting ceremony, taking place on the 22nd of August, 1947, was the first of its kind in the district. The project had been planned for some time, but it was not until the summer of 1947 that it was possible to carry it out. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success.

C.W.A. CEREMONY

The first ceremony of the C.W.A. was held on the 22nd of August, 1947, at the beginning of March Field in Gordon Park. The ceremony was held on the 22nd of August, 1947, at the beginning of March Field in Gordon Park. The ceremony was held on the 22nd of August, 1947, at the beginning of March Field in Gordon Park. The ceremony was held on the 22nd of August, 1947, at the beginning of March Field in Gordon Park.



General View Of Assembly of C.W.A. Tree Planting



General View Of Assembly of C.W.A. Tree Planting

the ceremony was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success.

and Miss Ella Wright, now presented to Mrs. Rendell and to Miss Agnes Rogers who accepted it on behalf of her mother. Mrs. Rendell, who was also present, was also present. Mrs. Rendell, who was also present, was also present. Mrs. Rendell, who was also present, was also present.

THE PROCESSION

The various groups taking part in the ceremony on their way from the Old Church set off for the planting area on the 22nd of August, and under no circumstances did they march out of Charlton Park to the main road. They were packed on both sides of the road, and the whole area was a meeting place for the project. On arrival at the planting area, the various groups were met by the Charlton Association, and they were met by the Charlton Association, and they were met by the Charlton Association.

the ceremony was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success.



March of young working demonstrators.

PLANTING

Prior to planting the trees, the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success. The project was carried out by the Charlton Association, and it was a great success.



Mrs. G. E. Jones, R.E.C. (in foreground) and Mr. A. E. Wright demonstrate correct planting method.

THE SCHOOLS

(Continued from front page)

two will be placed, one standing up and one lying down. The standing one will be placed in the center of the plot and the lying one will be placed on the left side of the plot. The standing one will be placed in the center of the plot and the lying one will be placed on the left side of the plot.

and several small trees, so it will be seen that the tree has to be planted in the center of the plot. The tree has to be planted in the center of the plot. The tree has to be planted in the center of the plot.

and a very practical interest in the planting as they had the backing of the Education Department, Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. The school represented were Charles Fisher, R. (Rochester, Minn.), Al. Joseph's College, (Rochester, Minn.), Charles Smith, (Rochester, Minn.), and the Department of Agriculture, (Rochester, Minn.).

FILMED IN COLOR

The entire festival was filmed in color by Mr. E. R. French, who is the Department of Land and Survey, and it was most successful. The film was most successful. The film was most successful.

We are informed that here in the future, the Department of Land and Survey will be in the center of the plot.

Shire President's Thanks

COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING



Mr. French, who was the Shire President, was the one who was the Shire President.



Waiting for signal to plant.

The entire festival was filmed in color by Mr. E. R. French, who is the Department of Land and Survey, and it was most successful. The film was most successful. The film was most successful.

P. ROGAN

Shire President

THE OFFICIAL PARTY

Mr. E. R. French, who is the Department of Land and Survey, was the one who was the Shire President.

MARSHALLS

Mr. French, who was the Shire President, was the one who was the Shire President.

D. KESSALA and LEGION

Shire President

E-COUNTRY SCHOOLS' BLOCK

Shire President

F-CHARLTON SCHOOL'S BLOCK

Shire President

G-ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE BLOCK

Shire President

THE PLANTERS

The entire festival was filmed in color by Mr. E. R. French, who is the Department of Land and Survey, and it was most successful. The film was most successful. The film was most successful.

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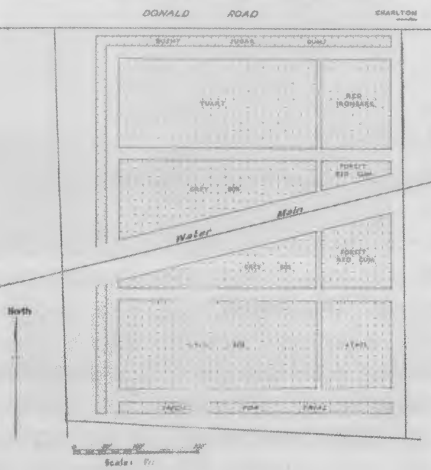
Mr. C. E. French replying to speech by Dr. P. Rogan (Shire President)



Some young planters

Plan of Planting Area

NOTE-In the Planting, the Plan was varied by reversing the position of the tree block and the tree block.



Shire President and G.W.A. President plant a tree in the garden park

HOW TO DIG THE HOLE AND PLANT THE TREE

The following advice should be followed when planting a tree. The following advice should be followed when planting a tree.

The following advice should be followed when planting a tree. The following advice should be followed when planting a tree.

these throughout the State, organising local tree-plantings and distributing literature. A major country event, a "Community Forest Planting" was held at Charlton in North-Central Victoria on 22 August 1947. People from town and the surrounding districts braved a bitterly cold and overcast afternoon to plant trees. Local businesses and schools were closed to enable participation by all. A special souvenir issue of the *Charlton Tribune*, published to honour the occasion, featured photographs of large, well-rugged up crowds marching military-style in rows, and patiently awaiting their opportunity to plant the Wooranook Water Reserve.³² The species chosen were bushy sugar gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*), tuart (*E. gomphocephala*), red ironbark (*E. sideroxylon*), grey and black box, (*E. microcarpa* and *E. largiflorens*), forest red gum (*E. tereticornis*) and athel tree (*Tamarix aphylla*, a native of southern Asia). The species were selected for general hardiness, drought resistance and salt tolerance. The plantation had a very high success rate, due to the careful choice of species and the excellent preparation of the land by the Shire Council.

Trees to Plant

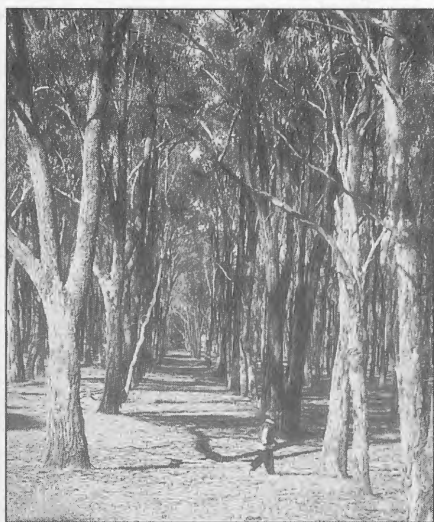
District tree-plantings were a great success as a public educational activity, but they relied heavily on a good supply of suitable trees. Cyril Isaac was concerned that the plantings should be successful in the medium and long term as forests, not merely "fun days out". A growing forest which planters walked or drove past regularly was the best possible reinforcement of the educational message of the Campaign. He argued for the establishment of a Research Nursery, run by the Campaign itself for its own purposes. The species thus raised would ensure a wider range



Rosemary Taylor - President STFC 1948
[NRCL archives]

of available trees, and would be matched with the needs of their destinations. The aim was to minimise losses from unsuitable plantings. The Campaign's Nursery was set up to concentrate on "native trees suitable for timber, shade and other purposes, and the hardier native shrubs suitable for the outer row or the 'understorey' of windbreaks, especially in the drier districts which have suffered so much erosion". Exotic trees and shrubs "of special merit" were also grown.³³ Before any contracts for sale of trees were arranged,

Isaac had 25,000 Australian trees and shrubs growing in trays on his own property in Dandenong. (The development of the Campaign's Nursery at Springvale is detailed in Chapter 3.) The Nursery that he established was to play a crucial role in underpinning the Campaign's ongoing viability, both financially and educationally. The bias of the stock of the Campaign's Nursery also influenced the nature of forests and woodlots planted, both on private and public land. Plants were not only supplied to the Shire members of the Campaign, but also to Soldier Settlers, and to other private landowners. The Charlton Community Forest planted in 1947 (described above, p. 18), featured some of the first products of the Campaign's own Nursery, all but one species native to Australia. By contrast, the Dandenong Community Forest, planted in 1944 from Forests Commission stock, comprised six blocks of exotic softwoods (Douglas fir, cedar, corsican pine, *Pinus ponderosa*, *P. radiata*, [two blocks]), and only one block of (mixed) Eucalypts.³⁴



Charlton Community Forest, 1990
[Photograph: Tom Griffiths]

Exhibitions and Demonstrations

After the first two years of major Forestry Exhibitions at the Melbourne Town Hall (attended by 10,000 and 12,000 people), the venue for exhibitions was shifted to the Royal Agricultural Show. This reflected the Campaign's emphasis on reaching those living outside the metropolitan area who perhaps only came to the city once a year for the Show. The Show also enabled the Campaign to catch the eye of the passers by who would not have considered attending a specialist "forestry" exhibition. Exhibits were often provided by Government departments and semi-Government authorities, different ones featuring in different years: for several years the MMBW displayed a model of a catchment area, whilst for the 1948 Atomic Age Exhibition, the Forests Commission combined with the SRWSC to present a dramatic burnt forest setting with the theme "The Burning Match is the Atom Bomb of the Forests".³⁵

Major Exhibitions in Melbourne (and Ballarat in 1946 and 1948) were supplemented in other regions by film nights, portable exhibits and demonstration plantations. The Campaign's film unit, established in 1949

and supported by the Cinema Sections of the Forests Commission and the Department of Agriculture, prepared and showed a range of films documenting the conservation of various resources. Portable exhibits were shown at local agricultural shows in such places as Rochester, Shepparton, Tatura, Kyneton and Bairnsdale. The most prominent of the Demonstration Plantations of the 1940s were those organised for Soldier Settlers. By the end of 1949, 142 demonstration plantations (22,000 trees) had been planted



*Demonstration Planting, Colbinabbin 1979. Lance Edgar in suit.
[Photograph: 'Matt' Mathews - NRCL archives]*

throughout the State's soldier settlement blocks, facilitating the Campaign's research into the suitability of various species for a wide range of conditions. Trees for the demonstration plantings were supplied free of charge to the soldier settler, provided conditions concerning their maintenance were fulfilled.³⁶

Government Support for the Campaign

In addition to the regular support freely given to the Campaign by individuals from Government departments and through displays and information provided by departments, the Campaign received its first direct Government grant of £715 (pounds) (through the Forests Commission) in 1947. This amount increased dramatically over the next three years (1948 - £2,000 and 1949 - £4,000 respectively), until it was set at £5,000 (pounds) per annum in 1950.³⁷ But, as the 1 December 1949 editorial in the *Warrnambool Standard* remarked, voluntary efforts continued to provide the backbone for the Campaign's efforts:

"Governments can supply the funds for planting, preserving

and restoring forests, but as in all important community movements the best results are obtained when the public works hand in hand with the Government. Voluntary effort can do much that Government cannot. The 'Save the Forests' campaign is a superb example of unofficial initiative that has support and representation from the Government."³⁸

The Campaign becomes a League

By the end of the 1940s the Campaign's Executive was faced with a number of critical decisions. The magnitude of Government support and the Campaign's rapidly developing Nursery enabled it to begin to consider the



One of the 'Save the Forests' Campaign exhibits Royal Melbourne Agricultural Show, c.1950 [Courtesy of Division of Forest Products - CSIRO]

possibilities of establishing itself as a permanent organisation. On the one hand, it had been enormously successful in its bid to raise public consciousness about the preservation and restoration of forests, and it had generated tremendous voluntary support for its cause. There were risks that the establishment of a permanent organisation would reduce the creative, voluntary input. On the other hand, long term voluntary support was difficult to sustain without constant nurturing. A fresh direction was needed in order to keep the Campaign's momentum. The publication, *An Inseparable Trinity*, describing the achievements of the Campaign in the 1940s, was a bid to recharge public interest in the Campaign, whilst it considered its options. Although the Campaign had published a great deal during the



Another of the 'Save the Forests' Campaign exhibits Royal Melbourne Agricultural Show, c1950 [Courtesy of Division of Forest Products - CSIRO]

forties, the material was predominantly in the form of practical "how to do it" leaflets on growing Eucalypts in tubes, choosing appropriate species, raising trees from seed, and so on. *An Inseparable Trinity* differed from the leaflets in that it specifically addressed the issue of the philosophy behind the Campaign, partly through its history and partly through statements chosen to broaden its base of support. No longer was the focus simply "forests". It had now to address the more complex interaction between the components of the "inseparable trinity" of forests, soil and water. The term "inseparable trinity" was quoted from Judge Stretton's colourful report on his third fire-related Royal Commission, on Forest Grazing (1946).³⁹ *An Inseparable Trinity* was one of the earliest documents to popularise scientific ecological principles in Victoria. Although the term "ecosystem" was not used by the Campaign, the concept was. The choice of the theme "Balance of Nature" for the annual exhibit at the Royal Show in 1950 was an example of this thinking.⁴⁰

George Thompson, who had continued to give strong support to the Campaign throughout the 1940s and had just been appointed Chairman of the new and more powerful Soil Conservation Authority, was well versed in the scientific documentation of interactions between natural resources. He pressed for the widening of the scope of the organisation.⁴¹ He was certainly keen to raise the profile of Soil Conservation in Victoria, and could see that this was a current political issue which, if adopted, could spark

"An Inseparable Trinity"



from *The Inseparable Trinity*, 1941 [NRCL archives]

new interest in the Campaign.

The issue of a new name as well as a new direction for the Campaign was raised when in 1951 a well-wisher who had planned to include a bequest in his will was advised by his solicitor that the Campaign's status was legally uncertain, and there was no guarantee that it would exist when the bequest became available. This advice spurred the Executive to incorporate as a non-profit making Company, under Section 18 of the Companies Act of Victoria (1938), with its own Memorandum and Articles of Association.⁴²

SIX YEARS OF PROGRESS

Summary of Yearly Development

- 1944** Inauguration — Purpose — Plan — Council of 30 Organisations — First Community Forest (Dandenong) — “Forest Week” — Forestry Exhibition in Melbourne Town Hall — First Year’s Income, £1605.

The “Save the Forests” Campaign was launched at a meeting of representatives of 30 organisations in the Melbourne Town Hall on the 27th January, 1944. The aim of the Campaign was to enlist public co-operation in forest preservation and re-afforestation. The plan of campaign adopted was to work through existing organisations rather than to set up a new body with individual membership.

- 1945** Campaign extended to Country — State-wide Community Tree-planting — Free Distribution of 45,000 Trees — Second “Forest Week” and Exhibition — Educational Leaflets Distributed — Second Year’s Income, £1707.

The main development of 1945 was the extension of the movement to the country. District committees were formed and 45,000 trees, supplied by the Forests Commission, were distributed free of charge to 86 community planting projects. A second “Forest Week” and an interstate Forestry Conference were held, while a second Forestry Exhibition in the Melbourne Town Hall attracted 12,000 visitors.

- 1946** Fire Prevention Week — 60,000 Trees Distributed Free for 116 Community Plantings — Royal Commission on Forest Grazing — Drive for Activity within 50 Member Organisations — Extensive Exhibit at Royal Agricultural Show — Third Year’s Income, £1810.

During 1946 Campaign activities were multiplied and extended, especially within member organisations. Probably the most important feature of the year, although not the most spectacular, was the Royal Commission on Forest Grazing authorized by the Government at the request of the “Save the Forests” Campaign. The report by the Commissioner, Judge Stretton, has led to extremely important legislation bearing directly on the conservation of forests, soil and water.

- 1947** Founding of Campaign’s Research Nursery — First Charlton Community Forest Planting — Municipal Councils become Nucleus of District Committees — First Direct Government Grant, £715 — Year’s Income, including Grant, £2233.

The principal event of the year was the founding of a Research Nursery by the Campaign on leased land at Springvale South, for the purpose of providing a wide variety of trees for country planting and, in co-operation with district committees, extending knowledge of the most suitable trees for all conditions of soil and climate. The Charlton planting was the first large scale demonstration of establishing trees, without any summer watering, in areas with less than 20 inch rainfall.

1948 Regional Representation on Executive—Returned Soldiers' Demonstration Plantations — Broadcasts in A.B.C. "Country Hour" — Atomic Age Exhibition — Contributions to Research Nursery by Country Municipalities — Government Grant Increased to £2000 — Total Income for Year, £3730.

All Regional Committees formed under the Central Planning Authority accepted an offer of representation on the Campaign Executive and the attendance of these Regional Representatives has proved an important factor in country expansion. Broadcast time made available to the Campaign in the "Country Hour" of the Australian Broadcasting Commission has been of great value and the interest of listeners was proved when more than 1,000 applications were received for copies of the script of the first series of three talks on tree planting.

1949 Extension of Campaign to Individual Land Owners — Educational Film Publicity — Portable Exhibit for Country Shows — Purchase of Land to Extend Research Nursery — 100 Country Municipalities Contribute £5 each to Nursery — Additional Broadcasting Time — Government Grant increased to £4000 — Total Income for Year, £6455.

With the exception of trees supplied to Soldier Settlers all Campaign assistance before this year had been for community planting on public land. A new activity called the Land Owners' Re-afforestation Movement was instituted this year to help land-owners in raising their own trees from seed and repairing some of the needless destruction of trees that has accompanied 100 years of settlement. Trial packets of tree seed were supplied free to members. The increasing interest of country municipalities is proving a great stimulus to the Campaign.



Public Opinion

The following extract from an editorial in "The Standard," Warrnambool, on 1st December, 1949, reflects public opinion in districts where the Campaign's work is known:—

"Governments can supply the funds for planting, preserving and restoring forests, but as in all important community movements the best results are obtained when the public works hand in hand with the Government. Voluntary effort can do much that Governments cannot. The 'Save the Forests' Campaign is a superb example of unofficial initiative that has support and representation from the Government."

NOTE.—Further details of activities mentioned in this summary will be found in later pages.

Much consideration was given to the title of the new non-profit making Company. Each of the words chosen in the name, Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria (NRCL), was selected with care. "Natural Resources" gave the organisation more scope than just forests or fire-prevention, whilst "Conservation" included a wide range of philosophical positions, and implied *use*, not just "saving" resources. The word "League", captured the sense of a band of divergent organisations gathered together under the banner of "conservation of natural resources". Although by this time it was possible for individuals to have membership of the organisation (under the Land Owners' Reafforestation Movement), special conditions were attached to this type of membership, and most individuals involved were representing other organisations. The title is long, but it continues to be fiercely defended as the best possible name for its philosophical position.⁴³ "NRCL" is an acceptable short form, although it is often referred to as simply "the League".



Seedlings in Wilkie's nursery, c.1950 [NRCL Archives]

Permanence

By late 1949, the Nursery was well established on leased land at Springvale South owned by Alex Wilkie, who was the Campaign's Nursery Manager. However, the spirit of permanence had moved members of the Executive Committee to agree to seek appropriate land to purchase. Wilkie's enthusiasm for this venture was such that when he heard hammering and saw a board go up on a suitable site opposite his own property early one morning, he immediately contacted the agent concerned and put down a holding deposit from his own money, lest the site be lost before the Executive could meet to consider it.⁴⁴ Two adjacent sites were also purchased while building commenced on the first, to make up the eight acres (3.25 hectares) on which the offices and Nursery are sited in 1990.

The Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria, incorporated as such on 20 December 1951, commenced business in a small 18 feet x 28 feet (6 x 9 metre) prefabricated wooden office building at its Springvale South headquarters in January 1952.⁴⁵

Chapter 2

Cyril Everett Isaac: The League's Founder and Visionary

Cyril Everett Isaac (1884-1965) was the prime mover in the establishment of the Save the Forests Campaign in 1944. Although many others made considerable contributions to the Campaign, and later to the Natural Resources Conservation League, no other figure was as influential in shaping the League's direction and program. Most of Isaac's visions for the League derived directly or indirectly from his personal experiences over the 60 years before the start in 1944 of the Campaign to 'Save the Forests'. His life story gives insight into the particular directions chosen for the Campaign and League up to his death in 1965, and beyond.

Isaac's twin concerns: Education and Forestry

Isaac was a Member of Parliament who prided himself on having special expertise in education and forestry. In 1946, when he was seeking a second 6-year term in Victoria's Legislative Council as member for South-Eastern Province, he remarked:

*"No one member of parliament can be an authority on every subject and the plan I have adopted is to make a thorough study of a few subjects. Education was the first subject I studied specially - particularly technical education. In the course of my investigations I visited all the technical schools in the metropolitan area and half of those in country districts ... [my] "Better Education" campaign ... made education a major issue at a State election for the first time."*¹

His parliamentary work for forestry included visiting forests in all States of Australia except Tasmania, and being instrumental in the setting up of the Royal Commission by Judge Stretton into Forest Grazing.² But it was much earlier that Isaac had developed his expertise and interest in horticulture, silviculture and conservation. And these interests had always been strongly linked with his first love, education.

First Teaching Appointments

The young Cyril's life as an educator commenced formally in 1900 when at sixteen years of age, he became a student teacher at Lee Street State School, North Carlton, Melbourne. His passion for gardening was also

developing at this time. A former pupil remembered him over sixty years later as the teacher who

*“dug a garden bed in the asphalt grounds of the school and taught the children of his class how to plant seeds and bulbs. It created wonder in my mind to see little black and brown seeds and bulbs develop into beautiful flowers.”*³

In his years as a State School teacher, Isaac moved around a number of schools in the country and city. One of his more significant appointments was in 1905 as Head Teacher of the State School of Sailor Bills at Ten Mile (School No. 1429), up the Goulburn River Valley from Jamieson toward Gaffneys Creek. He was remembered as one of the ‘outstanding teachers’, because in his brief stay (only two years), he established ‘a spectacular display of flowers in the garden at the front of the school’.⁴ The Ten Mile appointment was significant for Isaac personally because it was there he met Elizabeth Brown, whom he married on 3 September 1907. Elizabeth had grown up in nearby Kevington.

Isaac was well known and popular in the local mining communities, and acted as Secretary to the Committee which built the Public Hall at Ten Mile in 1906. In addition to the hall, some lovely trees in the school ground were a flourishing memorial to Isaac’s time there, noted with pride by him and his family when they visited Ten Mile in December 1929. But the hall, the trees and buildings throughout Ten Mile were lost in the fires on Friday 13 January, 1939. The inhabitants moved away and the town was never rebuilt. It was little wonder that Isaac determined to seek every opportunity to campaign against wildfire in the wake of this destruction.

Beginnings of the Victorian State Schools’ Nursery

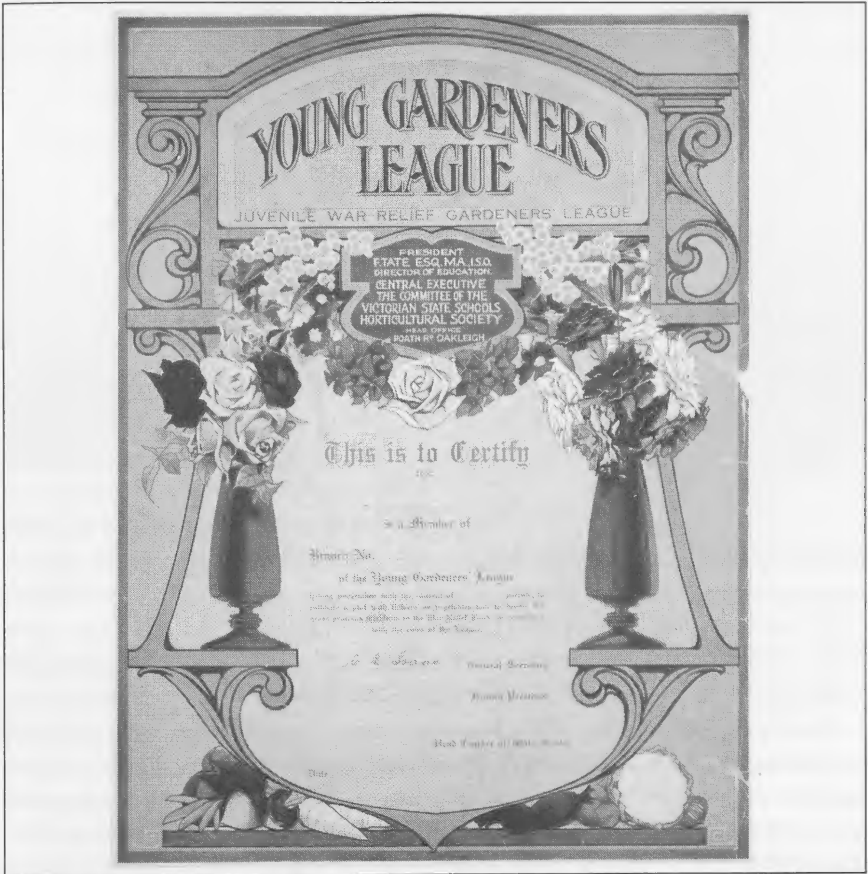
Isaac left Ten Mile in 1907 with his new wife for a promotion to Barsedown State School north of Bendigo. The drought of his first summer there left the school garden without a single plant. As a result, the following year Isaac announced a cooperative venture for exchanging plants among teacher enthusiasts at a meeting of the Bendigo Teachers’ Association ‘to ensure attractive [school] gardens over the whole year’.⁵

In 1903 the Australian Natives Association had sought to raise the consciousness of teachers and pupils about their school gardens by awarding an annual “School Garden Prize” for each of the Education Department’s Inspectorates. The Director of the Education Department, Frank Tate, had been personally involved in both this enterprise and in the introduction of “Arbor Day” into schools the following year to foster interest in forestry.⁶ It was Frank Tate again who becoming interested in Isaac’s scheme for plant exchange, set up a major meeting in Melbourne in August

1910. The meeting voted formally to establish the Victorian State Schools' Horticultural Society (VSSHS). Isaac was appointed to its first executive as Secretary.

In 1911, Isaac was transferred to Coburg School (No. 484), to spend half time on his duties as Secretary to the VSSHS, and the other half teaching horticulture to the boys in the upper grades. The first of Isaac's many Nurseries was established in the grounds of this school. He was delighted to have the opportunity to educate through practical skills and to build a supply of plants for use in school gardens throughout the State.

A successful appeal for funds led to the purchase in 1913 of just over two acres (0.8 hectares) at Hughesdale to establish a bigger Nursery on more suitable soil. In the meantime, VSSHS headquarters moved to Horticultural Hall, Victoria Street, Melbourne, and Isaac's position with the VSSHS became full time.



Certificate for member of the 'Young Gardeners' League' [Courtesy Edna Smith]

Flower Day and the Education Department's War Effort

Isaac's organisational skills matured through his time at the State Schools' Nursery. Only a year after the Director of Education officially opened the Hughesdale Nursery in 1915, Isaac organised the VSSHS's first Flower Day to raise money for the War Relief Fund. The culmination of Flower Day activities was a huge Flower Show in the Melbourne Town Hall on 3 November 1916, but there were many other functions throughout the State. Ambitiously aimed to raise £10,000 (pounds), Flower Day exceeded all expectations by raising over three times that amount (£32,309 [pounds]).⁷



Flower Day, Melbourne Town Hall, 1916 [Courtesy State Library of Victoria]

The success of Flower Day could be attributed to the strong support of young people throughout country as well as city areas. Young people wishing to make a contribution to the Education Department's War Effort could pay a penny to join Isaac's "Young Gardeners' League". They were then obliged to cultivate a plot of a certain area (usually 100 square feet - 20 x 5 or 10 x 10) in their home garden to grow flowers and vegetables.

The Young Gardeners' plots were not left to produce by good fortune or guesswork. They were the subject of an educative series of articles written by Isaac for the *School Paper*, a regular journal circulated to all students in Victorian State Schools. Young Gardeners were provided with topical information on how to prepare beds, draining and manuring, and what to

plant where and when. Money was raised by the sale of produce from each plot. It is clear from the overall financial success of the venture that many of these plots must have been very productive. The Young Gardener's parents could have flowers or vegetables from the plot only by buying them at current market rates, and what was not required at home was sold to neighbours and friends to aid the War Effort.

Eventually the Young Gardeners' League was absorbed into a larger "Young Workers Patriotic Guild", which extended Isaac's idea to all forms of work by requiring its members each to earn at least £1 (pound). Isaac himself enlisted in the AIF in 1916, straight after Flower Day, but additional Flower Days in 1917 and 1918 were held on the same model, and with similar financial success.

Flowervale Nursery

Isaac's next venture, on returning from the war and discovering that there were no further opportunities for promotion or real challenge within the State Schools' Nursery, was to strike out on his own and start Flowervale Nursery in Corregan Road, Noble Park. He began modestly in 1922 with a borrowed horse and cart to take seedlings to a stall at the Dandenong market. The business built up steadily and Isaac was able to purchase two cars and two trucks by the end of the 1920s, and to employ 20-25 people throughout the hard times of the depression.⁸

Isaac's eldest son (also Cyril) set up his own nursery business at Carnegie in 1931.



Cyril Isaac enlisted in November 1916, as soon as his Flower Day activities were complete. [NRCL archives]

The Royal Agricultural Show

By the 1930s, Isaac was back in the business of education. This time it was the general public, and his venue was the Royal Agricultural Show in Melbourne where he was 'Honorary Horticultural Adviser'. C E Isaac & Sons provided floral displays throughout the showgrounds for many years, as well as specialist features such as floral clocks, a 'Persian Carpet' display, and other novelties. Thus, when the Save the Forests Campaign came to arrange

a special Exhibit at the Show in 1946, Isaac's experience and contacts ensured its success.

Management Techniques

Isaac was undaunted by the organisation of large-scale projects, and his strong practical skills and willingness to try new ideas and basic techniques underpinned their success. He was as interested in small neat ideas for growing plants as in managing large concerns. His ability to keep both the detail and "big picture" in his mind simultaneously was the most important element of the organisational skill he honed at the State Schools' Nursery, then brought to his own Nursery, and finally to the League.

Isaac's was the first Nursery to sell seedlings by the "punnet". Borrowing the idea of plywood punnets from berry growers, his Nursery sold all its seedlings by the "dozen" in punnets. (A "dozen" was what the purchaser was promised, but in fact when the seedlings were "pricked out", sixteen were planted in each punnet - 4 x 4 - to make sure that there would be at least a dozen survivors.) It was not surprising that this innovative practical man would come up with original ideas for the propagation of trees at the League's Nursery.

Personal Contacts

The other important element Isaac brought to the League was a huge network of personal contacts made throughout a political career spanning thirty years. In 1922 he entered politics at a Local Government level as a Councillor for the Shire of Dandenong (representing South Riding - Noble Park and Dingley), and from 1940 until 1952 he was a Member of the Legislative Council of the Victorian Parliament. In addition, he was President of the Nurserymen and Seedsmen's Association in the mid-1930s, and his advisory role at the Royal Agricultural Show provided him with country as well as city contacts. This network was to provide the League with considerable goodwill.

Elizabeth Isaac

Isaac brought to the League a wealth of valuable practical experience and organisational skills. The strength of his leadership, however, owed much to his wife, Elizabeth, who supported him throughout all his ventures. During the period he was setting up the State Schools' Nursery she bore him four children (three sons and a daughter). His fifth child, a daughter, born soon after he left for war service abroad, he never met. She died aged 20 months in the 'flu epidemic of 1919. Elizabeth Isaac had also lost her mother six



Elizabeth Isaac and her children, 1918.

Back row – Arnold (5), Elizabeth, Cyril (9).

Front row – Bern (2), Dorothy (5 mths), Edna (7). [Courtesy Edna Smith]

weeks earlier in the same epidemic. She carried on alone, keeping the family together whilst her husband was making his way tortuously back to Australia on an ex-German vessel, the *Main*, which took three months to make the trip. Elizabeth was twice told that the *Main* had sunk and her husband had perished, before he finally arrived home safely. The stability of the household run single-handed by Elizabeth through these troubled years made it possible for Isaac to risk the financial insecurity involved in leaving the Education Department to start his own business.

Elizabeth was an enthusiastic gardener herself, and had faith that the Nursery would be a worthwhile enterprise. Her own horticultural successes included propagating a new variegated Lilly Pilly (*Acmena smithii* var. *Elizabeth Isaac*) about 1940. Cyril Isaac Jr. recognised the importance of

his mother's support for his father's initiatives, and, following her death in 1963, donated £500 (pounds) to the League in her memory. This was used to furnish the new Springvale offices.⁹

Thus the League received not just the support of one visionary individual, but rather the leadership of the whole Isaac family. The diversity of Isaac's life experiences and the personal friendships and contacts made through them were the inspiration for the League. Isaac's role in conservation and his work for the League were recognised in the award of OBE in the New Year's Honours List of 1956.



*Following the war, Cyril Isaac left the Education Department to set up business as a nurseryman.
[Courtesy Edna Smith]*

PART II

TRADITIONS

The fundamental purpose of the Natural Resources Conservation League is to foster the conservation of natural resources with emphasis on public education and practical support for tree planting activities.

[from "Conservation Philosophies", *Victoria's Resources*, 18(2), June 1976, p. 12]

The Natural Resources Conservation League evolved, building on the strengths of the earlier Save the Forests Campaign. In the true sense of "traditions", the League's have been transmitted by practice and word-of-mouth, especially by those who had long associations with it.

Some members of the Executive (including Charles Ewart, Bill Grauer, Cyril Isaac, Dorothy Laver and George Thompson) were affiliated and active in the League's programmes for three or more decades.

The staff of the League, especially those involved with the Nursery, gave remarkably long service (and frequently service beyond the call of duty), which facilitated the transmission of early visions into "traditions", still proudly upheld today. Most notable stayers were Lance Edgar (24 years service (1951-1975) then Director 1975-1979), Rowan ('Matt') Mathews (35 years service 1950-1985), and Margaret Nielsen (25 years), all of whom worked in senior positions in the Nursery. Alex Wilkie's early commitment to the Campaign and League (1948-1958), was also critical in the establishment of a permanent organisation. On the administrative side, Edna Webster was a source of continuity with over 20 years of book-keeping service (1965-1985).

The public has become versed in the "Inseparable Trinity" of resources - forests, soil and water - through the League's own "inseparable trinity" of traditions - the Nursery, Education and Conservation. Although these three traditions are traced separately in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, the overlap and interaction between them is significant, and the League draws its distinctive strength from their mutual support.

Chapter 3

The Nursery

"The Nursery is one of the magnificent achievements of the League, but it is not its prime purpose"

[Lewis Godfrey, Interview, 23/11/1989]

The Research Nursery was founded in the 1940s as part of the drive by Cyril Isaac to establish the Save the Forests Campaign as a permanent organisation, and one independent of individual charisma and effort. It was the first conscious "tradition" of an organisation seeking an ongoing and exciting program which would maintain the enthusiasm of its voluntary supporters. The Nursery provided the concrete peg on which the more abstract aims of "education" and "conservation" were hung.

Rationale for the Nursery

Cyril Isaac's blueprint for a Research Nursery, submitted to the Save the Forests Campaign Executive in 1946, argued for a Nursery as a practical activity of benefit to the movement in a number of ways:

- "(a) It would provide the **service** that has contributed to permanence in other movements and help in sustaining activity;*
- (b) it would help in making the movement self-reliant;*
- (c) it would facilitate the supply of trees on particular days to suit organised community planting;*
- (d) it would have an **educational value** especially in connection with metropolitan youth;*
- (e) it would provide frequent opportunities for **publicity** ;*
- (f) it could add to the **pride** of members in their **organization** ;*
- (g) it could promote the flow of **donations** to the movement;*
- (h) it could become the **permanent "core"** of the movement;*
- (i) it could gain public support for the movement which will be judged by what it **does** of permanent value, more than what it says should be done by others."¹*

Significantly in a list this long, Nursery profits were not mentioned. Isaac explicitly argued elsewhere that profit-making should not interfere with the other aims of the Campaign and its Nursery.

Isaac urged the Executive to act immediately while the movement was still growing and gathering strength. It was important to begin to provide

ongoing activities and services for members to maintain momentum. He was aware that "Leaflets and meetings are valuable but not sufficient without activity".²

Tree-planting activities were successful as a practical means to further the Campaign's first aim of "arousing public interest in forestry". They also increased the number of growing trees. But, more importantly, their prime purpose was to involve people in the growing activity.

*"... it seems more important to have an organized community planting in which scores or hundreds of people take part, even if it means going to some trouble to have trees arrive on a particular day, than to simplify despatch by sending the trees when it is most convenient to the nursery."*³

Isaac's practical experience as a nurseryman made him aware that most nurseries were ill-equipped to deliver a very large order of young trees at a particular time, and that this type of order required special expertise and planning. Thus the first requirement of the Campaign's Nursery was that it should be in a position to provide large numbers of plants on precise delivery dates.

A second requirement of the proposed Nursery was that it should provide a wide variety of types of trees, rather than limit itself to only cost-effective species. The "Demonstration Value" of a planting was something which was in keeping with the Campaign's aims. Even a small planting could demonstrate which trees grow with least loss or quickest, which are best windbreaks, timber, shade, shelter or emergency stock feed.

A side benefit of the Research Nursery, Isaac argued, was that it would serve to distance the Campaign and its community forest plantings from the Forests Commission (which had provided most of the trees up to the end of 1946). This would free the Campaign to offer the Commission, where appropriate, the backing of a "strong friendly organization . . . with sufficient independence to influence public opinion".⁴

Temporary Nurseries

The Campaign's activities in 1945 and 1946 had included planting 105,000 trees. The Forests Commission had provided most of these, supplemented by donations from MMBW and Isaac himself (1000 trees in the first year). Isaac grew trees to planting size in metal tubes loaned by the Forests Commission at his own expense at his home in Stud Road, Dandenong.⁵

Isaac's home nursery was soon crowded with 25,000 trees growing in boxes and tubes. Transplanting the seedlings from boxes to tubes was done by Cyril and Elizabeth Isaac with the assistance of two women working part-

time. From November 1946, Alex E Wilkie, on first an honorary, then a part-time basis joined the team. Sometimes they were assisted by local scouts and guides. In 1946 Wilkie had completed a refresher course at Burnley Horticultural College after being discharged from the army. His work at Isaac's commenced as soon as he had completed the course.

In April 1947, Alex Wilkie offered the Campaign the lease of two acres (0.8 hectares) of land suitable for growing trees on his property in Springvale Road, Springvale South (opposite the 1990 NRCL headquarters), for a nominal rental of £1 (pound) per annum. The Campaign's Executive seized



First nursery at Wilkie's property c.1948 [NRCL archives]

this opportunity, and appointed Wilkie as the first full-time Nursery Manager (and later Manager of the League). Within two years, the Nursery was carrying 100,000 trees annually in various stages of growth, without capital outlay (apart from frames and a work shed which was converted from a disused cow shed).⁶ The 'Temporary' Nursery was sufficiently remarkable to make it the venue for a formal inspection by State parliamentarians in 1949. The parliamentarians must have been impressed for they approved another major increase in the Government grant to the Campaign the following year. The Temporary Nursery also served to demonstrate to the Executive the viability of a Permanent Nursery venture.

The Permanent Nursery, Springvale South

The 3.25 hectare (eight acre) Springvale Headquarters site in Springvale Road was purchased in three instalments in September 1949, February 1950 and April 1952.⁷ The significant increase in the Government grant (to £5,000 (pounds) per annum from 1950) along with the continuing support of members and individual donations made the purchases feasible. Improvements comprising a manager's residence, office buildings and work sheds were developed in 1952 and 1953 through a loan of £2,640 (pounds) from the indefatigable Isaac. (The loan was repaid by 1958.) This enabled the Campaign's headquarters to move from its rooms at Temple Court, Melbourne to its own office alongside the Nursery. The disadvantage of losing the central city location was balanced by the convenience of proximity to the Nursery. The move served to facilitate the despatch of orders.⁸ But also, more importantly, it enabled the Nursery to become central to the identity of the new Natural Resources Conservation League. The League's office staff and members, who arranged meetings, publications and publicity, and its Nursery staff literally worked side by side.

In 1954 an appeal for £500 (pounds) to build a glasshouse brought a response of 1,000 pounds (including a Government subsidy), so two glasshouses were erected. By the time a parliamentary inspection by 35 Victorian MPs was arranged in 1954, the "scrub-covered paddock" had developed into a

*"well-equipped Nursery with a new staff cottage, offices, packing shed, soil shed, work rooms, 5 large glasshouses each holding 20,000 young trees and 20 frames 66 feet long by 4 feet wide fitted with sprays and each capable of holding 10,000 trees."*⁹

The growing Nursery also required a growing staff to tend it. Wages in 1954 totalled £8,000 (pounds).



Springvale nursery, looking East c.1955 [NRCL archives]

Some of the League's greatest contributors joined the Nursery staff in the very early years including Rowan ('Matt') Mathews (who commenced August 1950, and resigned in 1985), Margaret Nielsen (who commenced January 1951, and served for 25 years) and Lance Edgar (who began part-time in June 1951, went full-time in 1952, and served continuously until he was appointed Director in 1975). Edgar and Mathews became in turn, Nursery Managers. Margaret Nielsen's duties ranged from tubing seedlings, despatch and accounts, to acting as "hostess" to visiting dignitaries. She was also responsible for a very significant number of the League's Nursery staff - the women.¹⁰



Long-serving stalwarts of the Natural Resources Conservation League, Lance Edgar, Edna Webster, Margaret Nielsen and 'Matt' Mathews. [NRCL archives]

Women Workers in a "Nurturing" Profession

Much of the work about the Nursery was seasonal in nature, and it often fell to women who were prepared to take short-term and unsecured jobs along with family responsibilities. In the 1950s, in particular, the range of job options for women was limited, and the "nurturing" aspects of nursery work were regarded as appropriate for women. Women often were (and still are) responsible for time consuming and skilled tasks such as "pricking out", which involves removing 1-2 cm seedlings from seed trays and planting them into separate tubes, using a device called a "dibber", which looks like a heavy fountain pen. The skill is in deftly planting the tiny tree absolutely straight to ensure straight growth of both trunk and roots, and in tamping down the soil so that it is firm enough to stay in the tube.¹¹

Working "beyond the call of duty" was the hallmark of many of the Nursery's workers. Matt Mathews who lived in the cottage at the Nursery

from 1958 until the end of 1982, always made himself available to the needs of his work. On chilly wintry mornings he was known to rise at 4 a.m. and go out and switch on the sprinkler system to protect the young trees from frost damage.¹²

The loyalty demonstrated by the Nursery workers, women and men alike for their work and the League was particularly commendable given that nursery work was poorly paid (like other “nurturing” occupations such as nursing). The management of the workers by Edgar, Mathews and Nielsen was crucial to the success of the Nursery. Mathews, as Nursery foreman, would often go and work alongside a worker whose performance was not satisfactory, and by example and positive support, improve the worker’s technique.¹³



*Three of our early women workers
c.1948 [NRCL archives]*

The long-term reward for the League’s Nursery workers was that the young plants fostered under their care were not simply sold and forgotten. The League took a very real interest in their future, and much of the effort of Nursery staff was (and still is) directed to educating planters to ensure successful plantings. Many staff followed the examples of Lance Edgar and Alex Wilkie, freely giving time and energy to demonstrations, advising clients and preparing literature about the trees sold. They shared Matt Mathews’ opinion that while the supply of trees was important, it was

“more important that we ... provided the information to give the recipients every chance to grow those trees.”¹⁴

The staff enjoyed the privilege of working for the trees and not for profits. Selling was regarded by Isaac as “a necessary evil” ... “... what is got without effort or money is not usually fully valued,” so “to ensure trees are properly planted and cared for”, the Nursery charged (modestly) for its plants.¹⁵

Alex Wilkie and the League’s Field Work

The League’s policy was that it was important to reach the recipients of the Nursery’s trees, wherever they happened to live. Alex Wilkie, the first

Manager, was an energetic disseminator of information through his work as Field Officer. He made it his business to visit practically every part of Victoria. He arranged field days on farms and community plantings, he conferred with Municipal Engineers and Curators on street planting and gave demonstrations at schools and agricultural shows. By 1955 this work had grown so much that an assistant field officer was appointed to extend it.¹⁶ The clients clearly appreciated the League's efforts. In April 1954, a farmer, F G Ferguson from Dhurringile (near Murchison) donated £2,000 (pounds) to the League to enable it to purchase a truck and have it fitted up as a Mobile Field Unit, especially for use in rural areas.



Ferguson Field Unit 1954. [NRCL archives]

Isaac and Wilkie were regarded in the 1950s as the core of the League's team, especially in country districts which they visited together to promote the League's general aims (Isaac) and demonstrate planting techniques (Wilkie). It was therefore a great shock when Wilkie tendered his resignation to the League's Executive in 1958. There had been a disagreement between Isaac and Wilkie about the deployment of a particular staff member, whom Isaac wanted to work part-time on publicity and public relations, and Wilkie felt could not be spared by the Nursery. Apparently the duties of the Manager and Director were insufficiently demarcated for the dispute to be resolved amicably. Wilkie left to start his own Nursery (Tree-Planters) and was subsequently appointed Superintendent of Parks and Gardens for the

Springvale City Council. The loss felt by the League was expressed by Charles Ewart at the Half-Yearly meeting which accepted his resignation:

*"The general feeling was that the League would never really get anyone to take his place ... Mr Wilkie had regarded his work not as a career or job but as an inspiration."*¹⁷

The title "Manager" (which had included the offices of Secretary and Publicity Officer) was dropped after this time, and the earlier term "Nursery Manager" reinstated and revised. Lance Edgar was promoted to the new role of Nursery Manager. A positive result of the dispute, brought about by the hard work of then President, Dorothy Laver, was a close review and clarification by the Executive of the job descriptions within the League. This resulted in a formal amendment to the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the League, increasing and clarifying the powers of the Executive.¹⁸



The League's Field Unit travelled widely around the State. It is here shown at the Tatura Show, c.1954 [NRCL archives]

Techniques developed by the League

In a Nursery concerned with very large numbers of trees, even small improvements in techniques could result in great savings of staff time. Tubes had long been used to grow trees by the Forests Commission and others because of their advantages over pots in terms of storage space and because they enable a straight rather than a spiralling root system to be established right from the start. The tubes were made by bringing together the two ends of a metal tube with cunningly constructed clips. Much of the labour of the Scouts and Guides at Isaac's early home Nursery was devoted to this task. However, because of post-war shortages of sheet metal, flattened cans were often used, and the task was decidedly tedious.¹⁹ Isaac therefore experimented with other possibilities, beginning with his interest in forest products. The same ingenuity that had led him to introduce plywood punnets at Flowervale Nursery, brought him to use successfully wood veneer as a tubing material.

"A tube is made by wrapping a piece of wood-veneer 12 inches

long by 6 inches wide around a cylinder 6 inches long by 1½ inches in diameter. A piece of one-inch galvanized water pipe or a piece of stout broom handle will serve the purpose.

The twelve-inch length of veneer will overlap two and a half times, making a tube with sufficient strength to hold soil and to last for 6 to 9 months. While it is still wrapped around the piping or other cylinder, keep the veneer in tubular form with two rubber bands or fine wire – string is not sufficiently lasting. Finally, the piping is pulled out from inside the veneer tube, which is then ready for use.”²⁰



Tubing sequence c.1958: (top left) rolling the veneer tube; (top right) tamping the soil; (bottom left) pricking in the young seedling; (bottom right) a completed box of plants. [NRCL archives]

This simple formula provided the basis for all the League's 6-inch tubed trees until 1986, when Peter Rendle introduced 15 cm black plastic tubes. The 15 cm tubes are about 2 cm shorter in length (slightly reducing the length of the root system established), but they have the advantage of a tapered shape, which enables a sturdier girth to be developed. In the 1950s, the League also grew 9-inch tubed trees (up to about 3 feet [one metre] in height at planting), and larger trees in kerosene tins for street trees and roadside planting. Since 1986, 14 cm pots have taken the place of the 9-inch tubes, and the street and roadside needs are served by 20, 25, 31,

41 and 50 cm pots (the last two of which are generally grown at Cranbourne, rather than Springvale). The 6-inch/ 15 cm tubed trees have always been the “staple” of the Nursery’s sales. (2,000,000 trees in 6-inch tubes were distributed between 1945 and 1961.)²¹

Matt Mathews was also a great innovator. One of the neatest labour saving devices he developed at the League’s Nursery was a “jolt table”. The table, adapted by Mathews from a second-hand foundry table, simplified enormously the task of filling a tube with soil and compressing the soil by hand. He was also responsible for introducing the first sprinkler system to water the trees in the Nursery.²²



A young seedling about to be planted. [NRCL archives]

The Nursery's Clients

Over the years the major clients of the League's Nursery have included both caretakers of public land, and private landholders.

(a) Municipal Councils

Municipal Councils have always been amongst the League's most important clients. In the early years, councils were encouraged to join the "Save the Forests Campaign", through an annual distribution of trees. A membership payment of £5 (pounds) entitled the council to £15 (pounds) worth of young trees (based on cost of production). This attractive offer was subject to the condition that the trees were for non-profit planting on public land. (Councils requiring more than £15 (pounds) worth of trees could order additional trees at prices corresponding to one-third the cost of production, Nursery stocks permitting.) In addition, up to 2,000 trees were made available free each year to contributing councils for "Community Forests" of 25 acres (10



Portion of the crowd at a farmler owners demonstration day. [Photo: B. O'Brien - NRCL archives]

hectares) or more, which were subject to planning approval by the Forests Commission. Clearly these offers were attractive to Municipalities, for in 1949, 8 Cities, 4 Towns, 8 Boroughs and 72 Shires had joined the Campaign, some making financial contributions in addition to the £5 premium.²³

One of the special purposes for which Municipal Councils have sought trees has been naturalisation ceremonies. From 1957 onwards, the League supplied trees free for these occasions. At first the Golden Wattle (Australia's floral emblem) was favoured, but later a range of species were supplied.²⁴ Over the years the financial burden of providing up to 20,000 trees per year for this purpose became too great, and in 1990 the Executive Committee decided to charge for these trees.

The League has been involved with new trends in Municipal landscaping. Some councils, such as the City of Malvern, have adopted a policy of

indigenous planting in their Municipality. These councils collect seeds of local provenance to be grown by the League for planting.



Dorothy Laver, President 1957/59, presenting a naturalisation tree to Mr Johannes Den Hartog during a Naturalisation Ceremony at Springvale 1959. [NRCL archives]

In the late 1980s, the Nursery broadened the range of species grown to include groundcovers and grasses as well as trees and shrubs. The groundcovers are particularly useful for the landscaping of roundabouts which have become an important part of traffic regulation in residential areas in many municipalities. Native grasses are also increasingly being required by Municipal Councils and community groups for planting on public reserves and on private land, as the public recognises the importance of grasslands habitat for native birds and animals.

(b) Government Authorities

The Country Roads Board (since 1988 known as VicRoads) has been one of the League's most constant supporters over the years. It was represented in the 1970s and early 1980s on the Executive Committee by Bob Joyce, who was a staunch supporter of tree-planting on roadside verges. (Joyce was also behind the Education programs run by the League in the 1950s and 1960s for CRB employees.)²⁵ Members of the League take pride

in the fact that just about every major highway and freeway in the State is graced with trees and shrubs planted from the League's stock.



Springvale nursery - 1987 - general view of seedling stock. [NRCL archives]

Other Government authorities have also called on the League's facilities to raise indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses for special purposes. For example, the Urban Land Authority is redeveloping the old Williamstown Rifle Range to include the new Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve, which will be revegetated with indigenous species. The League's Nursery has part of the contract to raise plants from seed and cuttings of local provenance to replant the areas disturbed by the development.²⁶

(c) Farm Members

The League's other valued client group is the farming community. In 1949, the "Land Owners' Re-Afforestation Movement" was set up to encourage



CRB and Municipal Officers visiting Springvale Nursery, 1953 – on left Alex Wilkie, Cyril Isaac – speaking, President George Thompson. [Courtesy Country Roads Board]

landowners to raise trees from seed. An annual subscription of 5 shillings entitled the member to free trial packets of seed, samples of veneer for tubing and printed materials advising on the raising and growing of trees from seed.²⁷ Increasingly, farmers were calling for not just seeds but young plants, so in 1954 a type of “Associate” membership was created for those who farmed 10 acres (4 hectares) or more. (This was later renamed “Farm Membership”.) At the time, the League did not feel that it was appropriate to compete directly with commercial nurseries, nor did it wish to open the organisation to individual membership, so this special membership class was created to facilitate tree planting on privately owned land. Alex Wilkie’s rural visits supported the sales of trees and the mid-fifties saw a substantial number of farm members swell the League’s ranks.



Springvale nursery looking East from entrance gate c.1961. [NRCL archives]

Two special groups of farmers were singled out for attention by the League. From 1948, ten thousand trees were reserved annually by the Nursery for “demonstration plantings” on Soldier Settlement blocks. Trees were made available free to applicants provided they prepared the ground and fenced the area where the trees were to be planted, agreed to maintain the trees, and to allow occasional public inspections of the plantations.²⁸ In the early 1960s, another “free offer” was made to farmers, this time Migrant Farmers. The trees were distributed through the Good Neighbour Council. The majority of farmers who benefited from this scheme came from Italian, Dutch and German backgrounds, although it was open to immigrants from all countries.²⁹

In the 1980s, the League’s journal, *Victoria’s Resources*, was renamed *Trees and Victoria’s Resources* (and later *Trees and Natural Resources*), under the leadership of Geoff Douglas, the new Director. This reflected a concerted effort to attract more farm-based readers and tree planters. Articles on growing trees for shade, wind-breaks, emergency fodder and timber clearly targeted rural rather than urban based readers. Amidst widespread growing concern about farmland salinity, farm tree planting took on a new significance, which the League has sought to support. In 1990 clients such as Rural Trees

Australia in Hamilton, that ordered 200,000 specialty trees annually, made the League’s products available in country areas.

The Victorian Government’s LandCare support scheme, started in 1986, has raised consciousness of land degradation problems in rural areas, and has shifted the focus from centrally planned solutions to local, cooperative ventures, organised by farmers themselves. Government support in the form of expertise and small grants to cover the cost of trees has stimulated many individual farmers to band together into small LandCare groups covering particular local problems. From modest beginnings (one such group in 1986), interest has grown quickly (70 groups in mid-1990).³⁰ This could result in even more of the products of the Nursery being planted on private land in the 1990s.



'Matt' Mathews in the Springvale nursery c.1979 [Photograph - Courtesy 'Matt' Mathews]



Springvale nursery looking West c.1962 [NRCL archives]

(d) Hobby Farmers

Since 1988, the Nursery's products have been opened to a new client group: "hobby" farmers. The landholders' requirement has been reduced from 10 hectares (25 acres), to one hectare (2.5 acres), so that tree planters with much less land are able to purchase at the advantageous prices offered by the Nursery.

Research at the Nursery

The Nursery was founded with a specific brief to undertake practical research. Demonstration plantings provided it with much useful information about the needs of particular districts, which were passed on directly to clients.

One of the more interesting formal research experiments was carried out by the CSIRO in 1963 at the Nursery at Springvale South. Trees were grown under conditions where the various factors making up climate could be individually controlled. In a specially built glasshouse, young trees were grown (up to 2 feet in height) under various daylength conditions and temperatures. Tree growth, wood structure and chemical composition were assessed.³¹

In the late 1970s, through the initiative of former President, naturalist and farmer, Bert Boardman, the NRCL combined forces with the University of Melbourne to produce some of the first comprehensive research done in



The "Les Walker Field Unit" mobile display helped spread the ideals of the League, particularly in country areas. Here shown at Echuca for the Annual General Meeting of the Murray Valley League in 1983. [Courtesy Riverina Herald - NRCL Archives]

Australia on the biology of the mistletoe (particularly *Amyema* spp.). Boardman's observant eye had picked up that mistletoe was increasing on his own property and many nearby farms, so, through the League, asked the question: "What is known of the biology of the mistletoe?" The Botany School at the University of Melbourne replied that there had not been any systematic study done of the whole mistletoe group. The League then funded a major literature search and survey which was undertaken at the University under the direction of botanist, Dr Malcolm Calder. The University published a "status report" of the survey entitled *Mistletoe in Victoria: a Review*, which detailed research on all aspects of the mistletoe: physical and chemical control, life cycle and dispersal, and general biology. An entertaining short article about mistletoes was published in 1981 in *Trees and Victoria's Resources* (Vol 23(4)). Although the League was not directly involved in later research, it is worth noting that the status report was the starting point for a major research project on mistletoes, co-ordinated by Calder and a visiting American Research Student, Peter Bernhardt. In 1983, this culminated in the publication of a book, *The Biology of Mistletoes*, edited by Calder and Bernhardt, and published by Academic Press.³²

Tissue culture techniques developed by Vic Hartney of the CSIRO Division

of Forest Products in the 1970s have generated a clone of the River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) which appears to be tolerant to saline conditions. Some testing for this has been done in Western Australia, but the new strain was not proven for Victorian conditions. "Proving" takes many years because this species does not reach maturity (set seed) for 12 or more years. The NRCL has undertaken to test the species for Victorian conditions by "growing on" cloned trees raised in agar at Tooradin. These clones are being field tested in various parts of Victoria.³³

Another interesting ongoing research project sponsored by the League through the generosity of Bert Boardman, concerns the problem of trees ringbarked by grazing stock.³⁴

The Expanding Nursery

After about 20 years, the first glasshouses (built in the early 1950s) were proving inadequate for the increased stock handled by the Nursery. Three large permanent glasshouses were erected and dedicated to honour three directors, George Thompson, Sibley Elliott and Lance Edgar. It was particularly appropriate that a glasshouse honouring the work of Lance Edgar should be built close to the Isaac Educational Centre at Springvale Headquarters



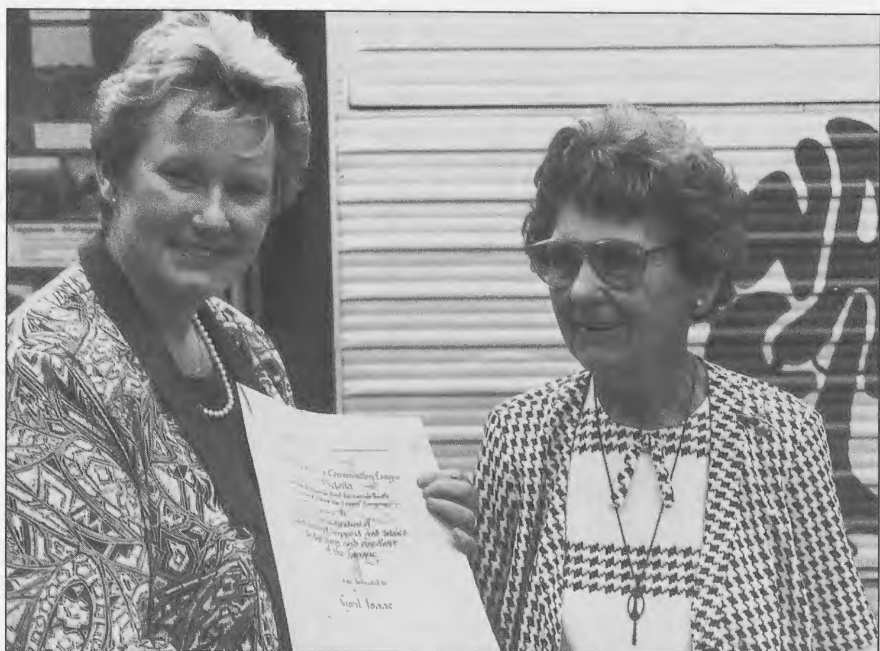
The C E Isaac Memorial Gate at Springvale Headquarters was formally opened by the Governor Sir Rohan Delacombe in September 1967. On the left is the Director, George Thompson. [NRCL archives]

for Edgar had led the educational programs of the Nursery for over two decades before accepting the job of Director.

Until this time the League had concentrated its commemorative efforts on the League's founder, Cyril Isaac, with the C E Isaac Memorial Entrance, and the Educational Centre. The G T Thompson, C S Elliott and L C Edgar Glasshouses marked the League's continuing tradition, and honoured the work of those who picked up Isaac's vision of the 1940s and 1950s and translated it to respond to the challenges of the 1960s and 1970s. The Cyril



*Cyril Isaac Avenue of Honour at Cranbourne nursery - looking West, 1989.
Shows trees and plaques honouring members.*



During dedication ceremony of Avenue of Honour 1989. The Hon. Kay Setches, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, presenting the certificate for Cyril Isaac to his daughter Edna Smith. [NRCL archives]

Isaac Avenue of Honour, dedicated in 1989 to mark the work of many of the outstanding individual contributions to the League over its whole history, was a further move away from the commemoration of “inauguration” to the celebration of continuation (See p. 131).

Cranbourne and Echuca

Limitations of space at the League's headquarters at Springvale South, led the League in the late 1960s to lease land at Lysterfield from the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to grow “open root” (ie not potted) deciduous trees. These trees are grown to a size large enough to withstand vandals, and are very popular with municipal councils. In 1978, when the lease expired, the League's Executive decided to purchase a substantial site in Cranbourne Shire particularly for open root stock.³⁵

The Cranbourne Nursery has expanded steadily over the years. In addition to the open root stock, large contracts (such as the one for Rural Trees Australia mentioned earlier) are often grown on the site, to free up space at Springvale South. The Cyril Isaac Avenue of Honour is planted at Cranbourne, along the entrance road into the property.

One of the consistent findings of all the research done at the Nursery over the years was that the needs of arid areas were significantly different from those of metropolitan Melbourne. In 1983, the League decided to set up a Regional Nursery on leased land at Echuca specifically to support these needs. Plants actually raised in arid conditions are more likely to thrive in them, and the Echuca Nursery is also much more convenient to farmers in the north of the State.³⁶

Part of dedication ceremony for Avenue of Honour 1989. Pupil from Greenslopes Primary School of North Dandenong planting a tree in a dedication area. [NRCL archives]



Short Course - 1984 - Road Construction Authority. Bottom left - Harold Gray, Course Organiser - middle left, 'Matt' Mathews - back left, Director Geoff Douglas [NRCL archives]



The Echuca nursery – 1984 – Manager Bert Wright and wife Sylvia [NRCL archives]



Echuca nursery – 1987 – general view of tree stock [NRCL archives]

Financial Independence for the League

The League's Nursery was not established for financial reasons, but over the years it has increasingly provided the backbone of the League's finances. The Government grant in the early 1950s was sufficient to cover the costs of about twelve staff members. In 1990, it would not cover the costs of one full-time staff member. The Nursery goes into the 1990s as a very big operation with 17 staff (12 full-time and 5 part-time) at Springvale South, 4 (3 full-time and 1 part-time) at Cranbourne, and 2 (full-time) at Echuca. The League also employs 5 full-time office staff.³⁷ These overheads could no longer be met by donations and membership fees alone. The proportion of income from tree sales has grown from an insignificant (1.6% in 1949) to a predominant (92.4% in 1988) proportion of the League's revenue. A comparison of the same years' Government grants reveals that they represented 37% of revenue in 1949 (and that was before it was raised to £5000 (pounds) per annum), compared with 1% in 1988.³⁸ The statistics



Springvale nursery - aerial shot c.1964 - looking West [NRCL archives]



Cranbourne nursery 1989 – advanced stock in containers. [NRCL archives]

reveal the extent to which the League's Nursery underwrites its independence as a conservation organisation.

Even in the lean years of the early 1970s when the accounts dipped frequently into the "red", the total number of trees distributed by the Nursery continued to climb. As the graph (p. 63) shows, the League's Nursery has been responsible for the growth and distribution of nearly 22 million trees over approximately a forty year period.³⁹ This alone must be regarded as a very major contribution to the conservation of Victoria's resources.

Trees Distributed
(000's)

1200

1000

800

600

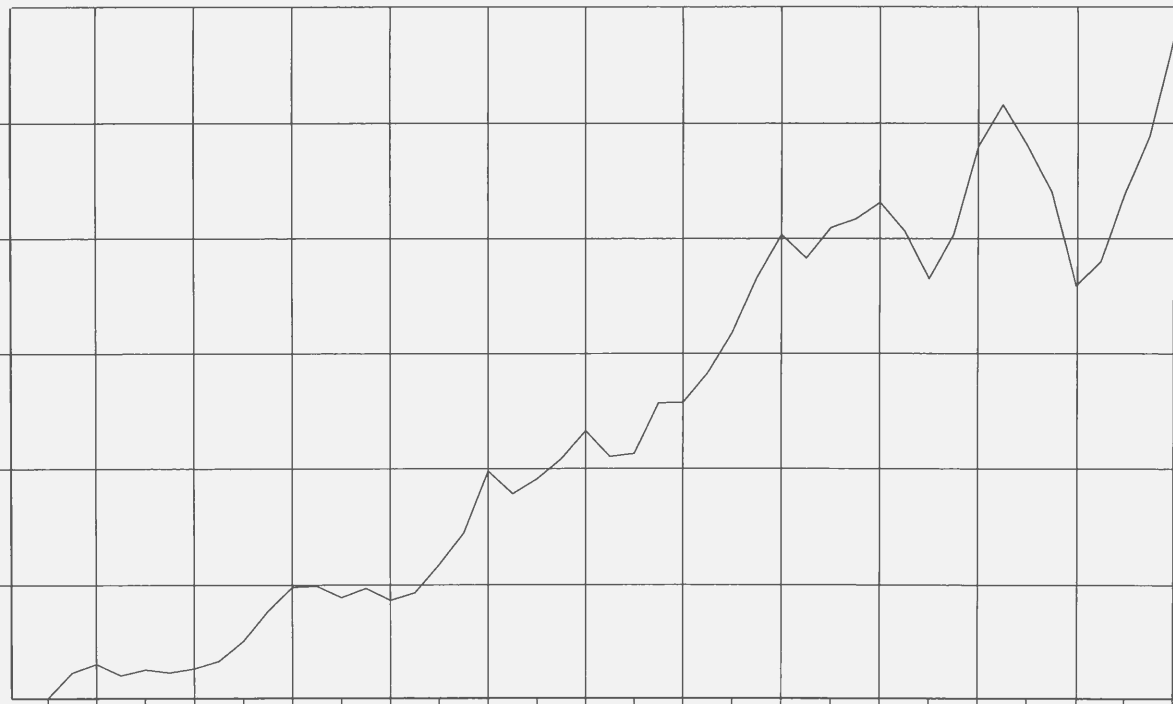
400

200

0

1944 1946 1948 1950 1952 1954 1956 1958 1960 1962 1964 1966 1968 1970 1972 1974 1976 1978 1980 1982 1984 1986 1988 1990

Trees distributed each year from 1944 to 1990 [NRCL records]



Chapter 4

Education

Educating the general public about the conservation of natural resources was a fundamental aim of the Save the Forests Campaign. Education programs were designed to be of benefit both to young people and the broader population. These initiatives continued to be a priority in the later years when the Natural Resources Conservation League was established.

At the inception of the Campaign, the Executive included Neil MacNeil, Headmaster of Wesley College, whose energies were directed towards School Forestry at Wesley and also in the wider community. Cyril Isaac's interest in horticulture and in propagating trees had been the driving force behind his leadership in technical education in Victoria, both when he was a teacher and later, a parliamentarian. Isaac set a practical agenda for educational programs, including adult education at the Natural Resources Conservation League's Nursery. Isaac's belief was that appreciation of trees was best taught through "doing" not simply "learning". Alex Wilkie and Lance Edgar also recognised that the League's Nursery was an ideal place to teach basic "hands-on" skills. Their "pupils" included young people (such as school students, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts) and adults (eg Municipal employees) who had the opportunity through their work to make an impact on tree planting throughout the State.

Theoretical and philosophical aspects of the League's education programs were considered through publications, the most important of these being the ongoing journal, *Victoria's Resources*, renamed *Trees and Natural Resources*. The League's Director, generally the Senior Editor of this journal, has over its 31 year history promoted ideas for discussion and published expert opinion on a wide range of issues of concern to natural resource managers. Regional Conventions and Forums also provided the opportunity for interchange between experts and the general public.

Early Education Programs

In the 1940s, the educative efforts of the Save the Forests Campaign were directed primarily toward publicity for its basic aim - the conservation of forests, soil and water. Important exhibitions at the Melbourne Town Hall in 1944 and 1945 were free to school children, and many teachers organised excursions enabling thousands of children to see the displays. Exhibits at the Royal Agricultural Show (as described in Chapter 1, p 19) from 1946 onwards provided an annual focus of educational activities, whilst leaflets



Senior Nurseryman Cyril Field with Ron Grose, President 1986/87. Presentation of 10 year service certificate. [NRCL archives]

and broadcasts on the practicalities of tree propagation appeared throughout the year. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the Nursery was being established and Alex Wilkie was Field Officer, some of the League's most important educational activities were field days and demonstration plantings throughout the State (Chapter 3, p. 45). From 1949, through the work of Ernest M Jackson, films with educational as well as entertainment value were an attraction, especially in country areas (Chapter 5, p. 89).

Education Programs at NRCL Headquarters

Once the Nursery and offices were established at their permanent site in Springvale Road, Springvale South, the League turned its attention to providing education programs from its home base. The first of these was a residential course held in a marquee in 1954 for Country Roads Board (CRB) and Municipal employees from country districts. Accommodation was provided in tents and meals were supplied from a portable cooker loaned by the CRB. Despite primitive living conditions the participants found the classes very useful and were enthusiastic about the program. The Nursery

proved to be an ideal resource for education on the use, selection, planting and care of trees.¹



The Hon. Cyril Isaac, MLC (on left), pictured at Springvale with a Parliamentarian "from the other side", The Hon. Sam Merrifield, MLA, Commissioner of Public Works in the Cain Labor Government Ministry of the 1950s. Photograph taken in front of the original office following the opening of the first school in 1954. [Courtesy: Country Roads Board]

In the 1950s a demonstration "Arboretum" was established along the boundaries of the Nursery property, which served an educational function both for formal courses, and for the casual purchaser of seedlings. Many short courses were conducted. For example, the 1958 *Annual Report* reports classes and courses conducted for

- Teachers - through the Education Department's Vacation Forestry School
- Young Farmers' Clubs
- Local High Schools (McKinnon and Springvale)
- The Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria (a foundation member of the League)
- Scout Masters and Senior Scouts.

Alex Wilkie was well known to and popular with the members of the Young Farmers' Clubs because of his regular country visits. As Assistant District Commissioner of Scouts, he trained Senior Scouts and Scout Masters in the basic principles of forestry through participation in week-end "Forester Badge" Courses at the Nursery. The eighty people trained at the Nursery went back to their troops qualified to offer leadership in this area to junior scouts.²



Alex Wilkie, Manager of the League until 1958 and District Commissioner of Scouts, with a typical Scout training course for "Forester badge".
[Courtesy: Joyce Wilkie]

In 1960 an appeal for £10,000 (pounds) was launched to set up a "Centre for Education in the Uses and Planting of Trees". The first aim was to build an accommodation and meals wing for residents at week-long courses. The first School at the Education Centre was held from 10-14 April, 1961, and the ex-army accommodation block was finalised for occupation only hours

before it commenced.³ Nursery staff worked tirelessly to prepare the building for use by the School, which was attended by Municipal officers from six different Shires and 10 CRB employees, along with specialist senior lecturers



The accommodation block at Springvale Headquarters c.1960. [NRCL archives]

from such diverse organisations as the Country Fire Authority, the Department of Agriculture and the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Later in the same year a Conservation School for members of the general public (particularly farmers) was set up to instruct participants on the conservation of a range of natural resources, including (but not exclusively) trees.⁴

In 1962 the Lecture Hall (designed to seat 150 people, and which is still used for all major meetings and lectures) was built, completing what has become known as the “C E Isaac Natural Resources Education Centre”. Building costs were substantially underwritten by a £5,000 (pound) grant from the State Government. The completion of the centre paved the way for many week-long Schools in Conservation Education for a diverse range of participants including

- Engineers engaged on road construction works
- National Park Rangers
- Municipal Officers engaged in the care and management of roadside planting
- Farmers’ wives
- Swimming pool operators.⁵



The Hon. Cyril Isaac watches as the then Deputy Premier, The Hon. Arthur Rylah, MLA, declares open the C E Isaac Natural Resources Educational Centre at League Headquarters in Springvale in 1962. [NRCL archives]



The League's first residential course for women attended by farmers' wives from every part of Victoria in 1965. In centre front row – George Thompson, Director, Cyril Isaac, Founder, and Lance Edgar, Assistant Director. [NRCL archives]

One important development which forged strong links between the League and the School Forestry Branch of the Victorian Education Department was

the institution of visits from school groups. Initially, as with other visiting groups, tours and classes were conducted by Lance Edgar and other staff of the League. However, the number of schools visiting grew steadily, and this became an important and time-consuming job. By 1964, the School Forestry Branch was regularly bringing children from various metropolitan schools to the Nursery one half day per week and supporting this activity with its own staff under the direction of Bill Grauer, Supervisor of School Forestry and strong supporter of the League. In the 1960s, Tom Oxlee was a popular lecturer, instructing children on general conservation subjects and demonstrating how a tree is grown from seed to the stage of planting out.⁶



First School at Education Centre

Back Row: (L to R): K J Smith (Shire of Alberton), W H Wootton (Shire of South Barwon), R S Pike (CRB), E C Pleming (CRB), A J Cambridge (CRB)

2nd Row: R H Nye (SEC), R E Baade (CRB), F L Lougoon (CRB), K G Kesper (CRB), J S Terrill (Shire of Mildura), R E Mayne (Shire of Flinders), F Cutting (CRB), F H Rauert (CRB), L G Boeyen (Shire of Buln Buln), R F Munn (CRB)

Seated: Dr G Scurfield (CSIRO), L C Edgar (Nursery Manager), J R Joyce (CRB), C E Isaac (Honorary Director), R D Anderson (Plant Pathologist, Dept. of Agr.), H B Wilson (Entomologist, Dept. of Agr.), A Sullivan (Shire of Heytesbury).

Pet Tree Kits

In 1979 the League's enthusiastic Assistant Director (Administration), Ed Adamson, suggested a new and appealing way of "packaging" the message of the League for school children. He conceived of a tree as a "pet", needing the special care and protection normally reserved for the animal variety of pet. This has proved to be a great success with primary school children, who like the idea of their own personal tree. A special kit was devised which



Promoting the League's "Pet Tree" concept.

included seed, and instructions about how to collect and grow it, in a booklet entitled "Seed to Seedling". The hall was still used for school group visits every Thursday in 1990 when Ian Pickering, the League's Education Officer, set up displays and children were given free "Pet Tree" kits to take away with them.

Arbor Day

In his radio broadcasts in 1955 (see also Ch 5, p. 88), Isaac had expressed concern about the waning interest in Arbor Day (later called Arbor Week) activities in schools. He felt that it was "more important than ever that children should grow up with a love of trees and a wish to plant and protect them".⁷ He urged that there be a creative drive to revive interest in Arbor Day. Where a school ground was fully planted he suggested liaising with the CRB and local Shires to assist in roadside planting in the vicinity of the school. That year the League sponsored the first of a series of "Best School Arbor Day" competitions, judged through a set of eight action photographs.⁸ However, by the early 1960s, the League had reached the conclusion that Arbor Day activities "lacked personal continuing interest for children".⁹

Junior Tree Lovers' League

The role of the Gould League of Bird Lovers in fostering children's interest



A well organised Arbor Day in progress 1955. [NRCL archives]

in birds (and in protecting birds eggs from amateur collectors) had long been acknowledged. Isaac felt that a similar group supporting trees could be organised through schools and that individual memberships might make its purpose more meaningful to children than the group-level Arbor Day activities.



Nullawil Primary School (near Wycheproof). A school planting in progress. [NRCL archives]

Isaac saw that the NRCL could offer the children's league a permanent headquarters and staff, continuing funds to subsidise its operation, and continuing support from the NRCL's member organisations. The Education Department, however, was of the view that teachers were already heavily

burdened with organising curricular and extra-curricular activities for students, and so initially resisted Isaac's suggestion of a junior branch to the NRCL to be known as the "Junior Tree Lovers' League". Isaac reminded the public and the Education Department in particular, that the League of Youth, launched in 1933 with similar aims had failed just for want of permanent headquarters and staff and that the NRCL was in a unique position to offer these.¹⁰

In 1961, Isaac took a small deputation to Ted Kreiger, the Assistant Chief Inspector of Education. Kreiger informed the deputation that he and the Chief Inspector were confirmed in the view that

"the schools are fully loaded – if we're going to put something in, we've got to cut something else out. We can't burden teachers with additional responsibilities".¹¹

Isaac then asked if he could approach School Committees about his cause and was told that this was not possible because they were official bodies of the Education Department. Isaac, undaunted, then sought clarification from Kreiger on the status of the Victorian Federation of [State Schools'] Mothers' Clubs (a member organisation of the NRCL). With the lukewarm encouragement that the Education Department "had no control over Mothers' Clubs", he set about achieving his vision for a junior league through that avenue.¹²



Junior Tree Lovers' League of Victoria



Junior Tree Lovers' League of Victoria 1962. The photographs on pp. 74-75 show preparation for an actual distribution of trees to some of the 35,000 members throughout Victoria of the newly formed Junior Tree Lovers' League. Members of the Mothers Club during midday recess at a Melbourne metropolitan Primary School, give out the trees as the Head Teacher calls the names (p. 75). Each child member receives a native tree grown in a wood-veneer tube for planting at home. Each tree bears a label with its name, description, and members name, and a planting instruction slip accompanies each tree. [NRCL archives]

The Nursery staff were sorely taxed raising at short notice thousands of extra trees with only the assistance of two part-time staff. However, through the efforts of individual Mothers' Clubs and other sympathetic organisations, the League managed to distribute these trees in schools in 1962, along with certificates of membership. The initial rush of orders for the first year meant a "steep learning curve", but it was not long before the Nursery was equipped and organised to handle the annual Junior Tree Lovers' League order.¹³

Initially the children paid one shilling for membership which entitled them to a certificate of membership, a tree to plant and instructions on how to plant it successfully. This entailed a subsidy of about 25% of the costs of each child-member, which was carried by the profits of Nursery sales in other areas, membership subscriptions and general donations. A total of

JUNIOR TREE LOVERS' LEAGUE

BRANCH OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION LEAGUE OF VICTORIA

1962

This is to Certify that

IS A MEMBER OF THE
STATE SCHOOLS MOTHERS' CLUBS DIVISION
OF THE
JUNIOR TREE LOVERS' LEAGUE OF VICTORIA

MRS. E. B. HOWELL, M.B.E.,
President, Victorian Federation of
State Schools Mothers' Clubs

MRS. C. B. HOWELL, M.B.E.,
Chairman, Junior League
State Schools Mothers' Clubs



A typical Junior Tree Lovers' League home planting.

Junior Tree Lovers' Certificate 1962



Junior Tree Lovers' League 1969.

Presentation of certificates to pupils of Canterbury State School, Melbourne by Mothers' Club representative. [Photograph Lewis Godfrey - NRCL archives]

more than three-quarters of a million trees were distributed through the Junior Tree Lovers' League in just over 20 years.¹⁴ Its first committee included representatives of Mothers' Clubs (both State and Catholic Schools), CWA, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. It also included senior members of the League's Executive concerned with education, including 3 out of the 4 members of the League's journal's first Editorial Committee.¹⁵



Education Officer, Ian Pickering, with pupil from Longwarry Primary School near Drouin, 1988. [NRCL archives]

Natural Resources of Victoria **and starting the quarterly Journal**

In 1957, the League produced a 100-page book *Natural Resources of Victoria*, for use in schools and the general community. It was launched in conjunction with a major Natural Resources Exhibition at the Melbourne Town Hall from 21-25 October. Twenty exhibits were provided throughout the week by State Government departments (14), Commonwealth Government organisations (1), Industry (2), Local Government (1) and the NRCL itself (2).¹⁶ Many school groups were among the visitors to the exhibition. By the middle of the following year over nine thousand copies of *Natural Resources of Victoria* had been distributed throughout Australia and overseas. The Education Department, in its *Gazette*, recommended it as a suitable publication for class sets, and many Victorian Municipal Councils also distributed the book direct to local schools in their shires.¹⁷

The success of *Natural Resources of Victoria* spurred the League to consider a regular educational publication. Since 1954, the League (through its Manager, Alex Wilkie) had produced, somewhat sporadically, a bulletin *Conservation News* (first called *NRCL News*), which featured items of current concern to the League. However, Wilkie's resignation had precipitated a review of that publication. Isaac and a team of senior editorial advisors, George Thompson (Chairman, Soil Conservation Authority), Alf Dunbavin Butcher (Director, Fisheries and Game) and Charles Ewart (Commissioner of Forests), were given a brief to produce a well-illustrated quarterly journal to educate the community and develop "public interest and recognition of [Victoria's] natural resources".¹⁸



Pupils of the Longwarry Primary School near Drouin, surrounding Education Officer, Ian Pickering, 1988.
[NRCL archives]

The new journal's role was education for conservation, through securing the cooperation of the general public with responsible Government departments in making the best use of natural resources.¹⁹ Like *Natural Resources of Victoria*, the first issues of the journal *Victoria's Resources* were biased heavily towards publicity for the work of major State Government



Some of the themes covered by the League's Journal. For more details see p. 134.

departments concerned with resource management. The new journal was distributed free to all post-primary schools and colleges. Articles were generally of a high standard, assuming little previous knowledge of Victoria's natural resources. Most articles were contributed under a by-line of a department or a senior individual representing a department. They were written in a style suitable for use in schools and were well-illustrated, but they lacked a critical dimension. They reflected the concerns of the triumvirate advising Isaac on editorial matters, but may have compromised the NRCL's independence somewhat by leaving the reader with the false impression that the NRCL was primarily a publicity agency for Government departments. The early "newsier" publication, *Conservation News*, lacked the professional finish of *Victoria's Resources*, but by sticking narrowly to the NRCL's prime concerns, was more clearly an organ of the League and had a 'personal' touch lacking in the new journal.

Developments in Victoria's Resources in the 1960s

The new journal sought to broaden the base of support for the NRCL's more abstract objectives, but it was not until about its fourth year of operation that it achieved its own independent style. Under the editorship of George Thompson, material began to appear under organised themes for whole issues, rather than the earlier bland coverage of the management of a range of natural resources in each issue. This sharpened the focus, and provided for more detailed and critical coverage. Themes covered are listed in detail on pp. 134-139. The incorporation of many fine independent writers increased the journal's status and readability. For example, the issue on *Wildflowers*, published in 1964 included original articles by such well-known writers as Winifred Waddell, Jean Galbraith and J Ros Garnet.²⁰

In 1968, *Victoria's Resources* specifically addressed the needs of younger readers through a twelve-part educational series called "Keeping the Earth Fit for Man", which was also reprinted as a set for use in schools by classroom teachers.²¹

Another 100-page book, *Man, the Earth and Tomorrow*, edited by D C White and C S Elliott, was published in 1969, also for use in schools. The first edition (5,000 copies) was quickly sold out and a second edition of a further 2,000 copies distributed.²²

Victoria's Resources in the 1970s

By the early 1970s the conservation purpose of the journal was paramount. Because the general public was becoming more sophisticated and better informed about conservation matters, whole issues of the journal were devoted to subjects such as Land Management in the Little Desert

(Vol 12(1), 1970), Alpine Areas (Vol 13(2), 1971 and 21(4), 1979), and Salinity (Vol 20(4), 1978 and 22(3), 1980). Thus, in a sense the “educational” aims became subsumed under the conservation objectives, and the information provided was increasingly pitched at an adult rather than a school-age reader.

This change in the emphasis of *Victoria's Resources* was probably partly an outgrowth of a new group within the League, the Associates, established initially in 1957, but expanding rapidly in the late 1960s. Associate membership was open to those who were neither major organisations nor landholders, and was therefore attractive to many (particularly urban) conservation enthusiasts, wishing to support the League and to have a personal subscription to the journal. From 1967, Associates were also entitled to attend special “outings” to places of particular conservation interest. The first outings focused on the metropolitan area, the Royal



League Associates on a visit to the Powelltown area (at road junction in the Mt. Beenak area) in 1969 [Courtesy: Forests Commission]

Botanical Gardens, the Fitzroy Gardens and the Maranoa Gardens at Balwyn. Outings had an educational as well as a social purpose. They were led by senior members of the League's staff, such as Lance Edgar, and also by other well-known natural history experts. Soon the Associates were travelling further afield, and in 1969, they were officially represented on the League's Executive Committee by Gwynnyth Taylor.

The Journal in the 1980s

In the 1980s, the title of the journal was changed by Geoff Douglas, the new Director, to *Trees and Victoria's Resources* (1981) and then to *Trees and Natural Resources* (1985). The target readership shifted perceptibly again. The articles developed a strong bias toward the concerns of rural landholders, rather than the more general concerns of city-based conservationists. Interestingly, this corresponded with a dwindling attendance at Associates functions, and a decision to finally abandon them in 1983.

Trees and Natural Resources is extremely well presented and illustrated, but it probably has less textual appeal to school-age readers (especially those in the metropolitan area), than *Victoria's Resources* did. In the 1990s individual farmers are becoming more concerned with land-degradation issues and the new-look journal aims to provide them with practical and theoretical information about managing their land. The move away from educative aims toward conservation, and particularly conservation from a rural vantage point, is an indicator of the League's moving self-perception as an organisation in changing times.

Educating for an Identity

One distinctive feature of the League's education programs over the years has been the range of documents produced to educate its own members (and the general public) about what the League stands for. Cyril Isaac was renowned in the 1940s and 1950s for his ten-minute introductory talks recapping on the League's history, origins and purposes at all general meetings.²³ These talks, supplemented by publications such as *An Inseparable Trinity* (1950), *End of Stage One* (1951), *Inauguration and Development of the Save the Forests Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League* (1959) and *Highlights of the "Save the Forests" Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria 1944-1965* (1965), served to focus and unite the representatives from the disparate organisations which comprised the League. In a sense, this history is a continuation of that tradition. In the 1990s' climate of proliferating conservation organisations, the League's tradition of educating its members and the public about its particular identity through its history is possibly more important than ever before.

Chapter 5

Conservation

Conservation, above all, was a scientific movement, and its role in history arises from the implications of science and technology in modern society. Conservation leaders sprang from such fields as hydrology, forestry, agrostology, geology and anthropology ... It is from the vantage point of applied science, rather than of democratic protest that one must understand the historic role of the conservation movement.

[Samuel P. Hays, writing of the Progressive Conservation Movement in America (1890-1920) in *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1959. p. 2]

Origins of the term “conservation”

The tradition most fundamental to the Natural Resources Conservation League is, as its title implies, the conservation of natural resources. The word “conservation” has carried myriad meanings over the past century, so it is important to spell out that the League uses it in exactly the way most dictionaries describe it: “*a concern for the wise use of resources*”. The League’s “concern” has a traditional basis in applied sciences, especially forestry, soil science and engineering.

The word “conservation” was first used in Australia in a technical sense about water conservation. The Victorian Parliament passed a *Water Conservation Act* in 1881, which was concerned with means to “conserve” (or save) water for times of shortage. It was some time before the term was generalised to refer to wise use of resources other than water. In Britain, the term “conservancy” was favoured until as late as the 1950s, but Americans used the term with respect to multiple-purpose river development late last century.¹

Although he did not invent the word “conservation”, Gifford Pinchot, the first American professional forester was probably responsible for its popularisation. Pinchot’s primary concern as Chief Forester was with the management of forests throughout America for sustained yield. “Conservation” was for him the opposite of “waste”. Pinchot also founded the popular Conservation League of America (in 1908) to arouse public support for “progressive development” through the professional management and wise use of natural resources, especially water and timber.²

The “conservation” espoused by the Natural Resources Conservation League has its roots in the tradition of professional management for sustained yield of renewable resources and “use without waste” of all resources.

Professionals and the League

As earlier chapters have shown, professional resource managers have over the years provided a very significant proportion of the leadership of the NRCL. It is hardly surprising therefore that technical management of resources has often motivated the League’s conservation programs. The League’s willingness to broaden from its initial focus on the resources of forests, soil and water to include wildlife and national parks explicitly within its ambit was a mark of the influence of a broadening range of resource managers. This was also important to the League’s popular appeal because the general public became far more sophisticated in its appreciation of the implications of resource use.

A defining characteristic of industrial societies is a growing number of professionals and a widening range of professional occupations. In modern western “acquisitive” societies some would see professionalism as the panacea for rampant individualism, and one of the means to achieve a “functional” society.³ A professional is, by definition, orientated to the needs of the community rather than to his or her own self-interest. Professionals often feel that they carry with them moral responsibilities for their areas of expertise. There is little doubt that over the years the League has offered professionals from a range of occupations the opportunity to address the moral and public problems facing their developing specialties.

Natural Resources

The interrelatedness of three resources: forests, water and soil was the focus of the Save the Forests Campaign’s first consciousness-raising. The elegance and simplicity of the “trinity” of resources captured the imagination of the first Campaigners. Later, wildlife and national parks became specific concerns.

Forests

The forestry profession as a whole had been deeply concerned about forests and the destructive effects of fire for many years, and had sought to raise a public “forest conscience” long before the publication of the report on Judge Stretton’s 1939 Royal Commission.⁴ Although neither Stretton nor Cyril Isaac was a professional forester, their concern for forests was informed by professionals. The Save the Forests Campaign with its “Plan

to raise a Public Forest Conscience”, was inspired by Stretton and Isaac, but relied also on the leadership of senior forestry professionals such as Sir Herbert Gepp from APM, Charles Ewart from the Forests Commission, and Alfred Hardy from the Australian Forest League. (See Chapter 1, p. 7.)

Water

The aridity of the Australian continent has ensured a public consciousness of the value of water right from the beginnings of European settlement. Large scale irrigation schemes in Victoria were mooted as early as 1856 at the Philosophical Society (later the Royal Society of Victoria). An Irrigation Act of 1886 enabled local water trusts to be supported by central funding for major capital works.⁵ However, the depression of the 1890s left the irrigation trusts in deep financial trouble. In 1905 the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was set up to give centralised direction to embattled irrigation schemes and to support the “Closer Settlement” initiatives designed to offer opportunities to the large numbers of unemployed. The new SRWSC was chaired from 1907 by Elwood Mead, a leading American professional irrigation manager schooled in the ideals of the progressive conservation movement.⁶ The engineers working under his leadership appreciated his sense of progress through conservation, and developed a pride in their own professionalism. They became deeply disturbed when, in the 1920s, the problems of soil erosion became so serious that irrigation channels were silting up, and were requiring increasingly frequent dredging. Thus some of the “water professionals”, particularly those who had worked in rural areas, turned their attention to soil problems.⁷

The other important group of “water professionals” involved with the Save the Forests Campaign were those concerned with urban water needs through the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, especially the Chairman, John Jessop, who was President of the Campaign in 1945. The distinctive “closed catchment” water conservation policy the MMBW had adopted since its inception in 1891 required justification to other potential users of water catchment areas of the State, so this group of professionals was well aware of the complexities of conservation issues. The closed catchment policy was not only a source of conflict between foresters and water engineers, but was also unpopular with those advocating country settlement, who perceived the catchment areas as being “locked up” for city use.⁸

Soil

The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission had significant difficulties in convincing successive Victorian Governments of the urgency of the soil

erosion problems throughout the 1920s and 1930s. However, the appointment of Harold Hanslow, a Tongala district irrigation farmer and a dynamic public figure, as a Commissioner of the SRWSC in 1938 (following a Royal Commission on soil erosion) gave the necessary impetus to pass a Soil Conservation Act in 1940.⁹ When the Save the Forests Campaign was inaugurated there was a statutory authority, the Soil Conservation Board, concerned with addressing the problems of soil conservation. Harold Hanslow himself was a member of the Campaign's Executive Committee in 1946. Soil conservation became a big issue of the 1950s after the SCB had been reconstituted as the Soil Conservation Authority, with George Thompson as its Chairman. The League was well placed to support its conservation activities and was kept abreast of developments in scientific expertise by Thompson himself. (See also Chapter 1, p. 22).

Wildlife

Another important resource manager joined the executive of the League in 1958. Alfred Dunbavin Butcher, was appointed Director of the Fisheries and Game Department in 1949, and influenced the League to consider "wildlife" as a natural resource of Victoria to be conserved and professionally managed. He was a qualified Zoologist, and was also the nation's first scientifically trained State department head.¹⁰ Butcher was particularly influential in the establishment of the tone of the new journal *Victoria's Resources* in 1959.

National Parks

The League was deeply involved with the foundation of the Victorian National Parks Authority in 1956. Cyril Isaac was its first Deputy Chairman, and Dewar Goode, another member of the Authority also had a long association with the League (including being President in 1962-3). There was a gap in the professional "resource management" ranks with respect to national parks which were only newly emerging as a "resource". In Victoria, the League, with its interdisciplinary team, was able to offer quasi-professional support to assist in the professionalising of national parks management. For example, "National Parks" were the special theme of eleven issues of the League's journals, from *Conservation News* in February 1956 right through to *Trees and Natural Resources* in September 1989.¹¹ Part of the purpose of these issues was to inform the general reader about national parks, but many serious ethical and philosophical issues concerning national parks management were also aired through this medium. The League also hosted courses for Rangers in the 1960s. The management of national parks has focused on the preservation of habitat and so, increasingly, national

parks' managers have come with a background in scientific ecology.¹² The resolution of the tension between preserving habitat and the recreational needs of visitors requires a diversity of skills, however, and the qualifications of national parks staff reflect that range.¹³

Conservation for the General Public

It would be an oversimplification to look only at the League's contribution to conservation through the professional concerns of resource managers, because the League is not and never has been a "professional club" or "technical enclave". Its distinctive mission has been to reach the general public, and its Nursery and education programs have ensured that this has occurred. The League's strong "grass-roots" membership of Municipalities, amateur clubs and concerned citizens' groups has ensured that it was never too isolated from the fresh strong winds of changing public opinion.



Corangamite Regional Convention, 1966 at Colac. On the Field Tour inspecting Mountain Ash and associated trees along Turton's Track in the catchment area for Colac's water supply. [NRCL archives]

One of the League's most important contributions to conservation and to the community has been to provide a bridge across the yawning gulf between professionals and amateurs. For "wise use" requires not just narrow technical expertise to avoid wastage, but also the social and philosophical evaluation of "justifiable human demands". The League sought through its

Forums (and earlier its Regional Conventions) to open up debate on conservation matters to all interested parties, professional and amateur, local and general, urban and rural.

Bridging the gap between Amateur and Professional

One of the League's most significant contributions to the conservation of Victoria has been to provide a forum for individuals with flair and popular appeal to "sell" scientific conservation principles to the general public. The various individuals have had different messages and have chosen different media, but the League has been important to each of them.

Cyril Isaac's Radio Broadcasts

Cyril Isaac had a particular talent for radio broadcasting. In the 1940s he had often given talks on radio about the work of the Save the Forests Campaign. In 1955, when he had retired from the Victorian Parliament, he took the opportunity to present a series of 50 weekly talks on the subject of Tree Planting and Conservation, which were broadcast on 9 Victorian radio stations.¹⁴ As can be seen from the Table on pp. 147-148, many of the broadcasts focused on the propagation of trees - collecting seed, selecting species, planning for plantation, etc. However, a significant number of the broadcasts addressed philosophical, technical or organisational aspects of conservation issues.

Isaac's broadcast on "Conservation is everybody's business" (No. 49) was, like all his talks, prepared in a simple and clear style and involved his audience in an immediate and personal way. He introduced his concern for the State's timber needs with the practical opening gambit: "Consider your house and the possible future housing needs of yourself or your children". Using estimates of timber needs for weatherboard and brick houses of average size, he multiplied up the numbers to demonstrate the needs of the State, explaining technical terms like "super feet" by using them in an everyday context.¹⁵

Isaac's detailed knowledge of bureaucratic systems was honed finely through his twelve year Victorian parliamentary career. In the "Value of National Parks" (No. 45), he demonstrated the importance of a central authority to manage the State's National Parks. It was not sufficient for the National Parks simply to be "declared". It was essential that the mechanism governing their management also be part of the legislation.

In "An Inseparable Trinity" (No. 46) Isaac included an explanation of the role of the Land Utilisation Advisory Council (a committee of Heads of Government departments set up in 1950 to facilitate communication between those managing the State's water catchments and soil

(conservation), a brave subject for a popular broadcast.¹⁶ However, with a light touch and a chatty style, Isaac demystified bureaucratic practices and systems, and showed their relevance to conservation objectives.

Ernest M “Watershed” Jackson - Water Catchments and Films

Isaac was only one of a number of supporters of the League who promoted conservation with an individual style. Ernest “Watershed” Jackson, nicknamed for his extensive work on the conservation of water catchments, was an irrigation farmer. He worked hard to bridge the gap between professional advisors and practical farmers in matters of water and soil conservation. He organised the Goulburn Waranga Irrigators’ League, founded the Watershed Association of Victoria and represented irrigation interests on a number of major committees.¹⁷

Jackson enthusiastically supported the Save the Forests Campaign’s outreach to rural areas by organising film nights in his capacity as director of the Campaign’s film unit, set up in 1949. The film unit was established with the support of the Cinema Sections of the Forests Commission and the Department of Agriculture, through Jackson’s personal connections. His years of practical irrigation farming experience had led to his appointment as Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Agriculture’s Mobile Extension Unit and Information Officer for the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.

Jackson was a generalist with a good understanding of the needs of farmers. He could interpret the conservation messages of the specialists and make them relevant. He contended that river valleys or “watersheds” should be managed as “wholes”, because the natural resources in them were inter-dependent. He was concerned that the irrigation farmers and others living downstream did not suffer because of the narrow vision of those working



*Ernest “Watershed” Jackson, irrigation farmer turned conservation educator.
[Courtesy: The Age]*

on the upper reaches of a river or surrounding areas. The visual medium was very important to him, as it made practical information immediately accessible to audiences from divergent backgrounds.¹⁸

His efforts were primarily directed toward farmers, but he was keen to demonstrate integrated conservation techniques to everyone, especially the young. In 1984 he published a book *Replenish the Earth*, for distribution in schools, and made the comment:

"If Collingwood kids understand and care for the Yarra and its catchment they will be more understanding of wider environmental problems in Australia and around the world".¹⁹

Dewar Goode - National Parks for Olympic Visitors

Another influential conservation figure with a style of his own was Dewar Goode, a great supporter of the League. Goode first became interested in conservation in the 1920s when he was managing a property in the Northern Flinders Ranges. He recalled a freak hail storm which hit a little hill bared by stock and rabbits. In the two or three hours in which about 17 inches of rain fell, an average of six inches of soil was taken off ...

"it took it off everywhere to that depth, but where there was a log, then it scoured and there were deep gullies ... that formed in just one shower".²⁰

Goode has published extensively about the conservation techniques he adopted personally, especially on his property "Brim Brim" near Coleraine, which was very degraded when he purchased it. He fenced off the slopes, the heads of gullies and the saline areas of the property. In some cases he planted them with trees, but often just allowed the native vegetation to restore itself with time.²¹

Goode's conservation interests were not, however, just local. His concerns extended from the Local to the State, National and International scenes. For many years he represented Australia on the Executive Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a body of Government and Non-government representatives "with discreet access to highly diverse sources of intelligence and support worldwide".²² His interest in soil conservation led him to landscape conservation. He always



Dewar Goode, President 1962/63, practical Western District pastoralist, and local and international conservation figure. [NRCL archives]

held the view that well-managed land is aesthetically pleasing. He was inaugural Chairman of the Landscape Preservation Committee of the National Trust. It was in the area of the development of National Parks where he and the League were most mutually supportive.

Goode was a member of the Executive of the League from 1954 and was President in 1962 and 1963. He was representative for the Australian Primary Producers' Union (APPU) as well as a personal supporter of the League's objectives. In 1955 the APPU organised a major public meeting to lobby for the establishment of National Parks in Victoria, particularly for visitors to the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. Goode, who had travelled widely, was aware of what other countries offered visitors through National Parks, and was able to provide some unflattering comparative statistics between Victoria and Britain and America. He was initially unaware that the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) had been formed in the early



Two of the League's enthusiastic long-term supporters Lewis Godfrey (left), and Bert Boardman (centre), with the Director, Les Schultz, in 1989. [NRCL archives]

fifties, and that a group from the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria (including most notably the radio personality, Phillip Crosbie Morrison) had been lobbying successive Victorian Governments to legislate for National Parks since the late 1940s.²³ The League provided a forum for all those concerned to meet and a joint public meeting was held, chaired by Goode, in which the efforts of the APPU and the VNPA were conjoined.

Further activities followed this meeting, including a special "National Parks" issue of *Conservation News*, in February 1956. The legislation which established the National Parks Authority was passed in October 1956, a month before the Olympic Games began in Melbourne.²⁴

The Little Desert Controversy

National Parks became a major political issue again in the late 1960s when a battle was fought over land use in the Wimmera region of north western Victoria. The "Little Desert" is an area of about 120,000 hectares, featuring sandy parallel ridges believed to have resulted from the westerly recession of the "inland sea" millions of years ago.²⁵ The heavy sands, lacking minerals critical to agriculture, and the relatively low rainfall had meant that although the areas around the Little Desert had been successfully developed for agricultural purposes, this pocket had been regarded as unsuitable. Between 1963 and early 1967, the Australian Mutual Provident (AMP) Society considered subdivision in the Little Desert for agricultural development, but eventually abandoned the scheme for economic reasons.²⁶ In late 1968, the then Minister for Lands, Sir William McDonald, announced a subdivision proposal for the Little Desert, believing that with the right management, the land could be successfully farmed. The League joined forces with those who felt that the only wise use of this ecologically rich but agriculturally poor country was as a National Park, preserving habitat for its many rare species, and providing a tourist attraction for the area.

The Wimmera Regional Committee

The League had sponsored a Regional Convention at Horsham in the Wimmera in May 1963 to consider conservation of the Wimmera's resources, in conjunction the Wimmera Regional Committee. The League's experience with organising Regional Conventions since 1953 (See pp. 141-143) and its base in the city, ensured that the function ran smoothly both for local and Melbourne-based participants. The success of this Convention prompted the Wimmera Regional Committee to organise a second major conference at Nhill on 26 August 1964, specifically to canvas opinion, both local and expert, on the AMP's proposed settlement scheme for the Little Desert.²⁷

The papers of the conference reveal that both development and

conservation issues were discussed openly by the local community and a large number of technical experts who travelled from all over the State to attend. The recommendations that arose from the conference were published and set the agenda for later events.

In June 1967 the issue was reopened by the newly elected Minister of Lands, Sir William McDonald.²⁹ At the Minister's behest the Land Utilisation Advisory Council examined a proposal to develop a significant part of the Little Desert for agricultural purposes. The LUAC report handed down in March 1968 recommended further investigation of the economic aspects of the proposal because of the poor wool prices of the time. It also recommended that certain sections of the land be reserved to ensure that wildlife and scenic features of the Little Desert be safeguarded.²⁹ The specific areas so designated corresponded with those endorsed for those purposes by the Wimmera Regional Conference in 1964.³⁰

The fact that the LUAC was called in to look at the agricultural development proposal at all was also indirectly the result of the Wimmera conference. The conference had recommended that the LUAC's powers be expanded to vet all land settlement schemes before finalisation.³¹ A Premier's directive in April 1966 empowered the LUAC to make recommendations on all Crown land use, not just on water catchments.³²

McDonald pressed on with various proposals to develop part of the Little Desert, using private agricultural advisors rather than those of the Department of Agriculture.³³ He also proposed that part of the area be used to expand the small National Park, a move which he expected would satisfy the conservationists.

The Save Our Bushlands Action Committee

By the middle of 1969, there was widespread opposition to agricultural development in the Little Desert and also, in a parallel situation, in the Kentbruck Heath water catchment area near Portland. Two separate, apparently local, agricultural settlement debates in the Wimmera and in Victoria's south-west came to have joint significance for the urban population. A new group, the Save Our Bushlands Action Committee, was formed to facilitate public debate on the subject. The organising committee comprised representatives of eight conservation and field naturalists groups, the League, the VNPA and the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, being the major organisations.³⁴ Gwynnyth Taylor, the President of the VNPA, and also an Executive member of the League, approached George Thompson and asked him to convene the new group, a task which he accepted with alacrity.³⁵

The Save Our Bushlands Action Committee organised two massive public rallies in Melbourne in August and October 1969. The first meeting at the

Lower Melbourne Town Hall, chaired by the League's President, Councillor John Clancy, was so over-subscribed that several hundred people followed Sibley Elliott (then the League's Organiser) 'like the Pied Piper' up the hill to Scots Church Hall to duplicate proceedings.³⁶ Even so, about 200 people were turned away. Bill Grauer, a long-serving member of the League's Executive who was roving with a microphone at the Town Hall recalled the hammering on the door of the crowd outside, and the fervour and enthusiasm for conservation of those who attended.³⁷ After a year in which this issue had received tremendous media coverage, especially through ABC radio's "Country Hour" and the *Melbourne Age*, the people of Melbourne welcomed a public meeting on the subject.

The next move by the Save Our Bushlands Action Committee was to present a "Bushlands Magna Carta" to another meeting in October, this time at the bigger venue of the Palais in St Kilda. The "Bushlands Magna Carta" urged the establishment of "a committee of people with special qualifications in biology and earth sciences, recreation and land management, both Government and Non-government" to consider "the recreational, scenic, nature conservation and scientific values of land". There were strong feelings expressed that no individual Minister of Lands should have sole control over irreversible decisions about the future use of public land, and that he or she should be accountable in some way to the general public.³⁸

The Land Conservation Council

After a huge swing against the Government in a by-election in Dandenong in early December, both the Little Desert and the Kentbruck Heath agricultural development plans were shelved, pending a full investigation by a Council to be set up by a Land Resources Bill introduced into Victorian parliament in the Autumn session of 1970.³⁹ Sibley Elliott, in his editorial to a special issue of *Victoria's Resources* focusing on the Little Desert debate, voiced the concerns of many when he asked:

*"Will the Land Resources Bill at present before the Victorian Parliament really achieve what conservationists want or will it supplant an existing potentially valuable Land Utilisation Advisory Council with a potentially impotent Land Advisory Council?"*⁴⁰

The Act which was finally passed, the *Land Conservation Act*, established a Land Conservation Council with new "environmental teeth". In addition to the members of the old LUAC, four new members were added to represent conservation interests: the Director of National Parks, and three members outside the public service, two with general conservation expertise and one with expertise in the conservation techniques used in primary production.⁴¹

In its first commission, the Land Conservation Council considered the south-west region of Victoria, including the sensitive area around Kentbruck Heath. Its recommendation to expand considerably expand the Lower Glenelg National Park (to include Kentbruck Heath and surrounds, and to link up existing national parks) was adopted by the Victorian Government in 1975.⁴²

The greatly expanded Little Desert National Park (1320 square kms) which was officially proclaimed on 21 June 1988, was also based on recommendations by the Land Conservation Council.⁴³

The League's Role in the Little Desert Dispute

The League's role in the Little Desert dispute was an extremely important one. Because of the large number of current and former senior Government officials affiliated with the League, including the Director, George Thompson (former Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority), the League had an unusually perceptive understanding of the bureaucratic machine associated with governing the State. The success of the Save Our Bushland Action Committee campaign derived from the realism behind the proposals it put forward. The League's expertise ensured that suggestions were framed in terms understood by the politicians and bureaucrats who would expedite their implementation.

The League, through its State-wide membership, also offered the Save Our Bushlands Action Committee representation of the rural population. Its Regional Convention (held long before the dispute came to a head) was the precursor of the 1964 conference which fuelled the dispute with factual information and was the means by which the people of the Wimmera initially made Melbourne-based people aware of local concerns about the region.

The Conservation Council of Victoria (CCV)

The League and others involved in the the Save Our Bushlands Action Committee recognised that the Little Desert dispute had precipitated an unprecedented unanimity amongst conservation organisations and in the wider community. They also saw the value of a representative joint group which would provide an obvious track for Governments to consult with conservationists about issues of mutual concern. The Conservation Council of Victoria was established in 1969 to build on the success of the Save Our Bushlands Action Committee and to represent formally all conservation groups. The CCV's brief was not to detract from the diversity of its member organisations, but specifically to provide "a single channel of communication for the exchange of views" for all Governments - Local, State or Federal.⁴⁴

The League's support for the infant CCV was extremely practical. The enthusiastic Lewis Godfrey, a former Executive member and then a staff

member of the League was seconded as the CCV's first Secretary from 1970 to 1975. The League made its office facilities available to the CCV and paid Godfrey's travelling expenses and an honorarium.⁴⁵ The League also published a regular column, "CCV News", later changed to "Point of View (contributed by the CCV)" in *Victoria's Resources* throughout the 1970s, which served to publicise the work of the CCV.

The League's hard work towards resolving the Little Desert dispute and in the establishment of the Conservation Council of Victoria was recognised in the award of the 1972 (inaugural) Victorian Conservation Prize (Neil Douglas Award) for "the most significant contribution to the Conservation of the natural resources of the State of Victoria over the previous 5 years"⁴⁶ (See p. 111).



Presentation of the inaugural Victorian Conservation prize 1972. Minister for Conservation, the Hon. Bill Borthwick, congratulating Director, George Thompson, President of NRCL on the left with Neil Douglas and his painting in the background. The painting is entitled "The Great Australian Presence" and it now hangs above the stage in the hall at Springvale Headquarters.

Changes in Conservation Concerns

Once the CCV had been established, the League turned its attention from the fighting of specific conservation issues to the dissemination of information about conservation. The League continued to have a reputation

as being a “moderate voice” in conservation matters. This facilitated broad-based discussions which welcomed a diversity of views. The Forums of the 1970s (See pp. 145-146) focused on conservation issues, with experts speaking on specific, local and general topics for interested members of the public.

“Roadsides and Conservation” Forum

One of its most important and productive Forums was on “Roadsides and Conservation” in 1974. Roadsides had long been a concern of the League, the CRB (VicRoads) being one of its Nursery’s most important clients. (See Ch 3, pp. 50-51) The result of the Forum was the formation of a Roadsides Conservation Committee (RCC), comprising senior officials from Government departments and Non-government conservation organisations. The RCC struggled for four years without a permanent home, the rotating Chairmen servicing the Committee with the support of their respective organisations. In 1978, Ed Adamson, the League’s Assistant Director (Administration), who represented the League on the RCC, approached the League for financial support for the Committee. The League’s Executive agreed to fund an Executive Officer for the RCC (Kerry Willis) to work one day per week at the League’s offices, using the typing, mailing and telephone facilities until 1981 when the RCC moved to the Ministry of Conservation offices.⁴⁷ The League has continued to have an interest in the Committee. The Executive Officer appointed in 1988 to replace Kerry Willis was Nan Oates, a regular contributor to, and former editor of *Trees and Natural Resources*. During the 1970s and 1980s other organisations such as the Soil and Water Conservation Committee and the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (who provided voluntary labour to assist in farm tree planting) also benefited from the League’s generosity in providing office space and administrative support.⁴⁸

Conservation - the League’s contribution

Conservation has always been the most challenging of the League’s objectives. It requires a multidisciplinary approach by “experts” and good community consultation. The League has over the years provided a meeting ground for the State of Victoria’s best conservation “experts”, and has never lost sight of its original brief to communicate and consult with the general public.

Cyril Isaac in 1955 expressed a hope that

*“Conservation will be regarded as of major importance by Parliament and by a perceptibly larger proportion of our people”.*⁴⁹

The League’s conservation work has contributed to the achievement of these aims.

PRESIDENTS 1944-1990



David McBride
1944



John Jessop
1944



Neil MacNeil
1945, 1946

No
photo
available

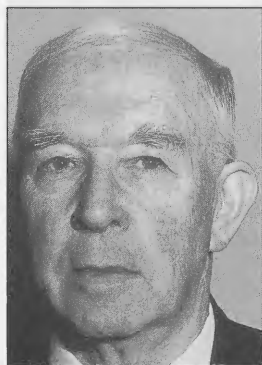
William Say
1947



Rosemary Taylor
1948, 1949

No
photo
available

Don Browne
1950, 1951



Austen Paterson
1952



George Thompson
1953, 1954, 1972, 1973



Cyril Isaac
1955, 1956



Dorothy Laver
1957, 1958, 1959



Bill Fleming
1960, 1961



Dewar Goode
1962, 1963



Alan Jones
1964, 1965



Bill Lyford
1966, 1967



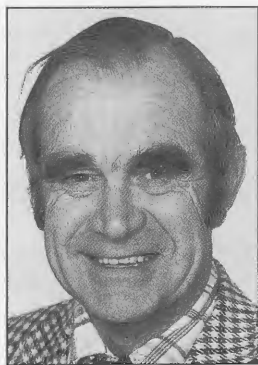
Jack Clancy
1968, 1969



Bert Boardman
1970, 1971



Kay Cameron
1974, 1975



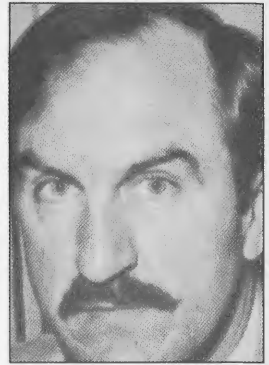
Geoff Douglas
1976, 1977



Bill Grauer
1978, 1979



Harold Gray
1980, 1981



Leon Trembath
1982, 1983



Bill Thwaites
1984, 1985



Ron Grose
1986, 1987



Helen Harrison
1988, 1989



Don Oberin
1990,

Epilogue

The Tradition Continues

In the beginning the Save the Forests Campaign set itself the task of attacking the enemy of forest conservation, fire. The enemies of conservation which the Natural Resources Conservation League confronts in the last decade of the twentieth century are much more complex and abstract. They include salinity, the "Greenhouse Effect" and ozone depletion. Yet tree planting and forest conservation may be important to all of them.

The general public's knowledge of conservation principles has become far more sophisticated, but so too have the problems. The need for communication between the scientists and technologists who understand the threats to the world's ecosystems, and the general public who may, through ignorance, exacerbate those problems, is as great as in 1944 when major forest fires frequently occurred through simple ignorance and carelessness. But because of the technical nature of the new problems and the inability of the most highly qualified to agree on preferred solutions, the task of communication with the general public becomes more difficult than ever.

Tree planting is widely advocated as a solution to, or at least a mitigation of, many of the world's environmental problems. Often tree plantings are blindly instituted by politicians who feel a need to demonstrate to their electorate that they are "doing something for conservation". The League has worked hard to ensure that the electorate expects conservation-conscious representatives in Parliament. But it would be a pity if Australia followed Britain where, according to Oliver Rackham:

*"Too much attention and too much money goes into the automatic and unintelligent planting of trees. Tree-planting is not synonymous with conservation; it is an admission that conservation has failed ... People plant trees, and get grants for doing so, without even looking to see whether there are trees on the spot already."*¹

Large scale projects need strong local support to ensure that tree-planting resources are used wisely. The League's policy of offering advice and not just trees, and its network of contacts in regional areas, has been, and will continue to be, crucial to good conservation practices. The League is in the business of transforming each of the trees it grows from the status of a mere commodity into a genuine conservation measure.



EXECUTIVE 1990. Left to right: Jim Starbuck, Peter Jones, Les Schultz (Director), Helen Harrison, Lewis Wilson, Peter Rendle (General Manager), Phillip Evans, Alan Bartley, Worrall Jones, Michael Coleman (Field Officer), Neil Seymour, Ken Read, Lynn Murrell, Ruth Cooke, Bill Thwaites, Neil Wetherill



*SPRINGVALE STAFF 1990. Left to right, **Back Row** - Brian Craig, Robert Fillisch, Chris Burgess, Raymond Shorthouse, Michael Coleman (Field-Officer). **Centre Row** - Pam Brown, Karina Battey, Kim Jaeger, Pat Simons, Gail Boxell, Elaine Pallot, Roger McGowan, Simone Jewson. **Front Row** - Bronwen Robbins, Sue Quinton, Evelyn Clifton.*

The League's conservation philosophy also recognises a role for culture and education. R G Downes in his 1968 paper "What Conservation Means Today", expressed it thus:

*"The modern concept of conservation presents a wholed new aspect of culture which should be promoted within the community as a basic aspect of education. Its understanding and acceptance in the community is urgent and important because it appears to be, not only the best means of drawing together the separated cultures of aesthetics and technology which are tending to split modern society, but also a necessity for the survival of man."*²

The League's Nursery supplies the practical support and technical expertise for tree planting, and advice to ensure that planting is an appropriate conservation measure. Nursery sales also lend financial support to the League's other traditions: Education and Conservation. The League's distinctive identity and strength come from the mutual support of its three traditions.



CRANBOURNE STAFF 1990. Left to right - Clinton Fowler, Stephen James, David Stewart (Manager).



ECHUCA STAFF 1990. Left to right - Echuca Manager Bob Richardson and his wife Jean with David Clapham.

Chronology

Significant Dates in the History of the Natural Resources Conservation League

1930s

1939 Wild fires devastate Victoria; 71 people die; over a million hectares of forest burned.

Royal Commission on Fires under the auspices of Judge Stretton finds that humans deliberately or accidentally caused the overwhelming majority of fires.

1940s

1943 Forestry Exhibition and Public Meeting at the Lower Melbourne Town Hall (17 December) (not well attended).

1944 Inspection of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works' water catchment forests by key individuals interested in forest policy. The group stayed at Wallaby Lodge at the invitation of Mr J C Jessop, Chairman, MMBW. (8-9 January)

Forest Policy Conference, (10 January), at Cliveden Mansions, East Melbourne (home of Sir Herbert Gepp, - Managing Director of Australian Paper Manufacturers); **"Save the Forests Campaign"** proposed by the Hon. Cyril E Isaac, MLC.

Public Meeting (27 January) to inaugurate the "Save the Forests Campaign" at the Lower Melbourne Town Hall - 150 attended with representatives from 70 organisations. - Council of the Save the Forests Campaign appointed representing 35 departments and organisations. (Membership of the Campaign was not open to individuals).

More major bushfires; another 49 lives lost; loss of some young mountain ash regrowth after 1939 fires before seed was set.

Publication of booklet (16 pages plus cover), *Victorian Forest Facts*, first of many publications of the Save the Forests Campaign.

"Community Forest Planting" - Dandenong West Reserve, (15 July) attended by 1200 people. Supported by the Dandenong Shire Council and the Forests Commission.

Second Public Meeting (8 November) confirmed the continuance of the Campaign.

Forestry Exhibition at Melbourne Town Hall (27 November-3 December) attended by 10,000 (6,000 paying adults - 4,000 school-children admitted free)

1945 Campaign Headquarters established at Temple Court, 422 Collins St, Melbourne.

District Committees of the Campaign formed. State Wide Community Tree Plantings - 86 Projects, 45,000 trees planted. (Trees supplied by Forests Commission).

Membership continuing to increase (35 departments and organisations in 1944 to 47 in 1945).

Second Forest Week and Town Hall Exhibition attended by 12,000 people.

1946 Preliminary tree Nursery for the Campaign started at Mr & Mrs Cyril E Isaac's property in Stud Rd, Dandenong.

Forests Commission supplied a further 60,000 trees for 116 plantings arranged by the Campaign.

Report of the Royal Commission on Forest Grazing by Judge Stretton; the Campaign was instrumental in calling for this Royal Commission, and publicised its findings by distributing 5,000 copies of select extracts from the full report. The Commission provided the basis for new legislation on the conservation of forests, soil and water.

First major Exhibit at Royal Agricultural Show.

1947 Six acres (approx. 2.5 hectares) leased from Mr Alex Wilkie (the Campaign's Field Officer) at Springvale South (opposite present site) for the first Research Nursery. Wilkie's title was changed later to Manager, a position he held until 1958.

First country Community Forest Planting at Charlton (22 August). Film of this event was shown at the Royal Agricultural Show in Melbourne the following month. First Government Grant - £715 (pounds).

1948 Returned Soldiers - Demonstration Plantings.

Broadcasts about Tree Planting and the Campaign by Cyril Isaac on ABC "Country Hour". Accompanying leaflets published and distributed.

1949 Establishment of the **Land Owners' Reafforestation Movement**, to aid farmers growing their own trees from seed. This was also the first individual membership type of the Campaign.

Members of Victorian Parliament inspected the Research Nursery.

1950s

- 1950** Publication of *An Inseparable Trinity: The Story of the "Save the Forests" Campaign*, compiled by C E Isaac.
"Balance of Nature" Exhibit at the Royal Show.
Government grant increased to £5,000 (pounds).
Victorian Government sets up its first Ministry for Conservation, with primary responsibility for the Soil Conservation Authority. The Minister was Henry (later Sir Henry) Bolte.
- 1951** 20 December - The Campaign incorporated as **The Natural Resources Conservation League** under Section 18 of the Companies Act of Victoria (1938).
- 1952** The League commenced operations at its new permanent headquarters at Springvale South, combining office facilities and Research Nursery.
- 1953** First Regional Convention (Maryborough, Central Highlands).
- 1954** Visit by 35 Victorian Parliamentarians representing all political parties to Research Nursery.
"Associate" membership introduced for those who farmed 10 acres (4 hectares) or more, subsuming the earlier Land Owners' Reafforestation Movement. [This type of membership was later renamed "Farm membership" - see 1957.]
Educational Programme at Nursery established with 15 organised visits from schools and community groups, and two "live-in" courses in tree-planting and maintenance for Municipal and Country Roads Board employees.
F G Ferguson, a farmer of Dhurringile near Murchison, donated a truck valued at £2,000 (pounds) to the League to be used for promotional purposes.
First issue of a quarterly journal *NRCL News* published in October.
- 1955** Quarterly journal, volume 2, renamed *Conservation News*.
Arbor Day Photographic Competition introduced in schools.
Fifty radio broadcasts about tree-planting, forestry and the League's activities given by Cyril Isaac; broadcast on nine different regional stations throughout country Victoria.
- 1956** Melbourne Olympic Games - League supplied 600 native trees in tins to the Housing Commission for use at the Olympic Village, and later at country Housing Estates; 3,000 native trees and shrubs

were used as part of an Arts Festival display in the Commonwealth Bank.

1957 Publication: *The Natural Resources of Victoria* (100 pp).

First contributions to **Naturalisation Ceremonies** by the League: Mrs S E Crow, Country Women's Association, Kyabram, suggested that the League provide sixteen Golden Wattles for new Australian citizens naturalised at a ceremony in Kyabram. The League embraced the idea, and over a thousand trees were distributed in 1957.

"Associate" membership available to individuals or libraries wishing to receive the journal only. [Associate "outings" were introduced later - 1967].

1958 August - Last issue of news-sheet style journal, *Conservation News*. (This journal had been irregular throughout 1957 and 1958.)

1959 A new full-colour quarterly journal, *Victoria's Resources*, was issued under the powerful co-editorship of Cyril Isaac (Hon. Director, NRCL), George Thompson (Chairman, Soil Conservation Authority), Charles Ewart (Commissioner, Forests Commission) and Alf Dunbavin Butcher (Director, Department of Fisheries and Game). Although renamed in 1981 and 1985, this journal has been issued quarterly from March 1959 to the present, and is one of the League's greatest achievements.

Attempts made to set up League branches in country regions.

Roll of "Notable Tree Lovers" established by League to acknowledge the work done by individuals who had invested particular effort in planting trees.

1960s

1960 September - launch of appeal to raise £10,000 (pounds) to build an Education Centre at the Nursery headquarters.

1962 Completion of the "C E Isaac Natural Resources Education Centre", including the meeting hall which accommodates 150. Opened by the Deputy Premier, Sir Arthur Rylah.

Junior Tree Lovers League began with 36,000 members. The first Honorary Director, Cyril Isaac, retired after 18 years of service. The next Director, Charles Ewart, was appointed but unable to take office because of a serious illness which resulted in his death. The next active Director was George Thompson, former Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority.

Publication in America of the influential book, *Silent Spring*, by biologist Rachel Carson, alerting the public to the dangers of

pesticides in the food chain.

1963 Construction of a new office building at Springvale South, under the supervision of the Australian Paper Manufacturers' Architect's Branch. [Completed May 1964]

1964 Annual General Meeting held at Bendigo Town Hall.

New Springvale offices officially opened by Cyril Isaac Jr. on 23 September.

1965 17th September Cyril Evrett Isaac passed away (aged 80).

George Thompson (Director) awarded OBE for services to soil conservation.

1966 Amendment to Articles of Association (24 March).

1967 Hobart fires - The League supplied the City of Hobart with 3,300 trees to assist in replacing the ones lost in the fires.

"Associate Outings" began; the first was held on 30 April, to the Botanical Gardens, led by Ros Garnet and Lance Edgar; The Fitzroy Gardens and The Maranoa Gardens (Balwyn) were also visited that year.

The League joined the Australian Conservation Foundation as a "Member Body".

C E Isaac Memorial Gateway opened by the Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe (27 September). Designed by award-winning landscape architect, Ellis Stones.

The League's Nursery used for an episode of the television serial "Hunter", filmed by Crawford productions.

Major Drought - "driest year ever recorded for Melbourne and the metropolitan area".

1968 No trees distributed through the Junior Tree Lovers League because of the drought.

Offer of 100 free trees to all Landowner members of the League who had lost plantations or farm woodlots in the fires of summer 1967/8.

Associates outing to "Serendip" Wildlife Station, Lara. Seminar at The University of Melbourne on "Water Supply Catchments" (sponsored jointly by the League and the Council of Adult Education) (23/24 August).

Western Port Proposed Industrial Development - League worked with Peninsula Conservation League in preparing submissions. [See also Mornington Peninsula Conservation Forum 1970.]

"Keeping the Earth fit for Man" - Twelve part Educational series on Conservation issues published in *Victoria's Resources*. [December

1968 - September 1971]

- 1969** Foundation of the Conservation Council of Victoria; April meeting of representative organisations; 30 October meeting elected a provisional Executive. The Chairman was Alf Lawrence (recently retired Chairman of the Forests Commission), and secretary was Lewis Godfrey, seconded from the staff of the League.

The "Little Desert Dispute" - The League put forward a submission to the Minister in support of a national park in the Little Desert; The League also supplied major support for the "Save Our Bushlands Action Committee", which organised huge public rallies in support of the Little Desert as a National Park. The first of these meetings, in the Lower Melbourne Town Hall on 29 August, was chaired by the League's President, Cr John Clancy, of Kilmore. An "overflow" meeting held up the street at Scots Church Hall was conducted by the League's Honorary Organiser, Sibley Elliott. A full issue of *Victoria's Resources* (Vol. 12 (1), 1970) was devoted to the Little Desert.

Publication of *Man, The Earth and Tomorrow* (100pp) edited by D C White and C S Elliott - 5,000 copies first edition; 2,000 copies second edition distributed.

Associate members represented on the League's Executive for the first time (by Gwynnyth Taylor).

"Keep Australia Beautiful" Campaign - supported by the League's special issue of *Victoria's Resources*, Volume 11 (2), 1969.

1970s

- 1970** "Forums" on topical issues replaced "Regional Conventions", the first being Mornington Peninsula Conservation Forum, focussing on industrial development in the Western Port area.

Conservation Council of Victoria - regular news page published in *Victoria's Resources*, commencing Volume 12 (3), 1970.

Annual Meeting held in Geelong.

- 1971** Through the initiative of its inaugural secretary, Lewis Godfrey, the Conservation Council of Victoria upgraded its news column to "Point of View" a page given to reflection on an aspect of a current conservation issue by an eminent writer, commissioned and introduced by the CCV. Thirty-four of these were published throughout the seventies; their uniformly high standard made them a regular highlight of *Victoria's Resources*. The first, appearing in Volume 13 (4), was by University botanist, David Ashton, entitled "Mangroves in Victoria", important to the general reader concerned about the

Western Port Industrial Development Proposal.

- 1972 Foundation of the Soil and Water Conservation Society of Victoria, formed in association with the League (April). Until 27/3/81, its role was to promote investigation of soil and water problems, and to present its views to the League for appropriate action.

George Thompson retired as Director at the Annual Meeting held in Benalla after 10 years. The new Director was Sibley Elliott.

The League won the 1972 (inaugural **Victorian Conservation Prize** (Neil Douglas Award) for "the most significant contribution to Conservation of the natural resources of the State of Victoria over the previous five years". Its prize, the painting, *The Great Australian Presence*, depicting Wyperfeld National Park, was presented to the League on 27 March 1973, and hangs above the dais in the main hall at League headquarters.

- 1973 Victorian Ministry for Conservation significantly expanded under the leadership of its new Minister, Bill Borthwick.

- 1974 Motif introduced - designed by long-serving League staff member, Ed Adamson, whose artistic talents were also evident in many photographs contributed to *Victoria's Resources* throughout the 1970s.

"Roadsides and Conservation" Forum led to establishment of the Roadsides Conservation Committee. Ed Adamson represented the League on this for many years.

- 1975 Lance Edgar appointed to the position of Director, on the retirement of Sibley Elliott.

- 1976 Articles of Association amended (Second Amendment) (22/9/76). Twenty-fifth anniversary issue of *Victoria's Resources*, "From the Ashes of Disaster" (December)

- 1977 "Les Walker Field Unit" purchased with a legacy of \$15,694 from Leslie Walker of Mt Martha, a private citizen who supported the League's work. This van for mobile displays of the League's work assisted in increasing the League's work particularly in country areas.

- 1978 Forty hectares purchased at Lyndhurst in the Shire of Cranbourne for new "open-root" stock Nursery. Open-root stock had been held on leased land at Lysterfield until this purchase was made.

Roadsides Conservation Committee given permanency with the appointment of an Executive Officer (Kerry Willis), who worked one day per week at the League's Springvale office.

- 1979 Lance Edgar retired as Director after 28 years of service to the League. Rowan ("Matt") Mathews and Ed Adamson shared the burden of "Acting Directors" whilst the position was advertised. In

October, Mr Geoff Douglas, President of the League in 1976 and 1977, resigned as Chairman of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board, in order to take up the appointment of Director. Field Day and Seminar conducted by Roadsides Conservation Committee in Ouyen and Walpeup on "Roadsides and their value to the Farmer" (26 June).

"Your Own Pet Tree" Campaign for school children, conceived by Ed Adamson and launched by the Victorian Premier.

1980s

1980 "Focus on Farm Trees" Conference in Melbourne in November led to the formation of the AFTR committee (Australian Farm Trees Regeneration Committee). The *Proceedings* of the conference were published and distributed through the League.

1981 *Victoria's Resources* renamed *Trees and Victoria's Resources*. New symbol: "Get Behind the Trees", designed by Geoff Douglas and Dick Crees.

1982 "The Year of the Tree" - linked to the "Decade of Trees Greening Australia" programme promoted by the United Nations Association of Australia. The Commonwealth Government and private efforts supported this initiative.

Major drought.

Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (ATCV) established. The League supported this venture with space in *Trees and Victoria's Resources* for promoting the concept of voluntary conservation brigades amongst potential farmer-employers. It also provided a Melbourne base and postal address for the co-ordinator of the programme.

1983 Ash Wednesday Fires: League offered vouchers to the value of \$50 to victims of the fires, distributed through the Victorian Farmers and Graziers Association.

The "superministry" of Conservation, Forests and Lands created by the Victorian Government. The first Minister was Joan Kirner. Echuca branch nursery approved by Executive (25/8/83); first orders taken early in 1984, when Bert and Sylvia Wright moved from Springvale to establish this new venture in producing tree seedlings suitable for warmer and arid regions of the State.

1984 Publication *Trees for Farm and Roadside Planting* written and distributed by the League.

The H A Boardman Research Fund established with a donation

of \$2058 from Bert Boardman (the League's President in 1970 and 1971). The aim of the Fund is to support research into "the loss of stringy barks and acacias by stock grazing".

- 1985** *Trees and Victoria's Resources* renamed *Trees and Natural Resources* from Volume 27 (1). The League felt that this would allow a widening of emphasis to include Australia-wide and international activities.

Death of Geoff Douglas (1925-1985) on 30 September. Peter Rendle, the League's General Manager was Acting Director until the appointment of the present Director, Les Schultz, formerly of Australian Paper Manufacturers, in March 1986.

The League received an award from the Victoria 150 - Growing Together Committee for services to the State. It was awarded for work on the Gippsland Farm Tree Competition, much of which was done by "Matt" (Rowan J.) Mathews just before his resignation in July after 35 years of service to the League.

Roadsides Conservation Committee republished Edna Walling's 1952 book *Country Roads: The Australian Roadside*.

- 1986** "Geoff Douglas Memorial Trust" set up by the Wildlife Art Society to fund an annual award to encourage young artists.

"Geoff Douglas Memorial Tree Planting" organised at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary by Dorothy Meagher and the Blackburn and District Tree Preservation Society.

Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands launched the LandCare programme (25 November).

The League joined Greening Australia (the national body) and includes the Greening Australia logo on the cover of *Trees and Natural Resources* from December issue, [Vol 28(4)]

- 1988** New Warrnambool agency of the League opened. Others followed later in other centres (Wallington near Geelong, Hamilton and Wodonga). The aim was to promote the League in regional centres, and to give members convenient access to the League's products. Bicentennial Project - "Million Trees in Loddon Campaspe Region" - The League supported the Loddon Campaspe Revegetation Project by supplying tubed seedlings of indigenous species at discount.

- 1989** **Cyril Isaac Avenue of Honour** dedicated 5 April. Former presidents, long-serving members of staff and special contributors to the League over the years are honoured in this Avenue, at the Cranbourne Nursery. (The names of those honoured appear on pp. 131-132).

1990s

1990 Start of a decade of **LandCare**.

Victorian Ministry for Conservation and Environment created in April.
First Minister was Steve Crabb.

Notes

Introduction

1. Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981; Ch 4 "They Hated Trees", pp 37-40.
2. C E Isaac, "Plan for Building a Public Forest Conscience", republished in *Inauguration and Development of the Save the Forests Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League*, [Inaug & Dev], NRCL, Springvale 1959, p. 3.

Chapter 1

1. Victoria: *Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into the Causes and Measures Taken to Prevent the Bush Fires of January, 1939, etc.*, [L.E.B. Stretton], Government Printer, Melbourne, 1939, p. 5. An excellent comparison of the devastation caused by the fires in 1939 with the Ash Wednesday fires of 1983 was published in *Trees and Victoria's Resources*, 25(3), pp. 16-17. The area burned in the 1939 fires was many times that of the 1983 fires.
2. *ibid*, p. 25.
3. *Gum Tree*, June 1920.
4. Report on Australian Forest League General Meeting, 18 November 1943, *Quarterly Supplement to the Gum Tree*, 3(1), 1943, p. 3; Speech by Sir Herbert Gepp to Melbourne Rotary Club, 7 July, 1943, "The Forest Resources of Victoria and the Fire Danger", reprinted in *Quarterly Supplement to the Gum Tree*, 3(2), 1944, pp. 6-8.
5. G T Thompson, *A Brief History of Soil Conservation in Victoria*, Soil Conservation Authority, Melbourne, 1979; *Soil Erosion in Victoria*, Department of Lands and Survey, Melbourne, 1940; in manuscript notes held in the NRCL Archives at Springvale South, George Thompson recalled that C E Isaac (then in his first year as MLC) had shown great interest in the Soil Conservation symposium (p. 1, "The Save the Forests Campaign", signed and dated 28.12.80).
6. A V Galbraith, "Forests in Relation to Water Conservation and Erosion", in *Soil Erosion in Victoria*, *ibid*, p. 29.
7. W J Lakeland, "The Role of the Forest in Soil and Water Conservation In Victoria", in *Soil Erosion in Victoria*, *ibid*, p. 163.
8. Linden Gillbank, "Soil Erosion and Ecological Research on the Bogong High Plains", typescript chapter to appear in a forthcoming (1991) publication on the Alps by the Historic Places Section, Ministry for Conservation and Environment.

9. C E Isaac, *Forest Policy*, Speech to Parliament 1/12/43, Victorian Government Printer, Melbourne, p. 3.
10. *loc cit*
11. Bill Grauer, personal communication and Unpublished Notes based on 1968 discussions with George Thompson [Notes in possession of author]. Personal details of participants from *Who's Who*, 1944, and Geoff Browne (ed.) *Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament, 1900-1984*, Parliament of Victoria, 1985.
12. C E Isaac, "Plan for Building a Public Forest Conscience", republished in *Inauguration and Development of the Save the Forests Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League*, [*Inaug & Dev*], NRCL, Springvale 1959, p.3.
13. Minutes of the Forest Policy Conference, republished in *Inaug & Dev*, (*ibid*) p. 2.
14. Agenda, Meeting to Inaugurate a Save the Forests Campaign, 27 January 1944, republished in *Inaug & Dev*, (*ibid*) p. 4.
15. MacNeil was Victorian Rhodes Scholar, 1914, a fact kindly drawn to my attention by Bill Grauer, in a letter 23/5/90. MacNeil died on 1 August 1946 (while he was actually President of the Campaign Council), and so was robbed of the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing management of the Campaign's education programme.
16. Plan of Campaign, Meeting to Inaugurate a Save the Forests Campaign, 27 January 1944, republished in *Inaug & Dev*, *op cit*, note 12, p. 6. [emphasis original]
17. Victoria: *Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into the place of origin and the causes of the fires which commenced at Yallourn on the 14th day of February, 1944*, [L.E.B. Stretton], Government Printer, Melbourne, 1944.
18. Summary of the Development of the Save the Forests Campaign 1944-1945, in *Inaug & Dev*, *op cit*, note 12, p. 7.
19. Additional details kindly supplied by Margaret Lanigan, APM Archives.
20. C E Isaac, "Plan for Building a Public Forest Conscience", republished in *Inaug & Dev*, *op cit*, note 12, p. 3.
21. J E Menadue, *A Centenary History of the Australian Natives' Association 1871-1971*, ANA (Horticultural Press Pty. Ltd.), Melbourne, no date, pp.282-283 (afforestation), 308 (national floral emblem).
22. The first appearance of *NRCL News* late in 1954 coincided approximately with the final demise of the *Gum Tree*, the last issue of which was published early in 1956, but which was very irregular throughout the 1950s.

23. *Gum Tree*, 6(4), 1947; Individual membership was a category used later by the Natural Resources Conservation League to confer an honour on a person who had given outstanding service. "Farm membership" was also later available to individual landholders.
24. *Gum Tree*, 10(1), September 1951 p. 5 (broadcast) and 10(2) June 1952, p. 3 (editorial). Isaac was not in fact re-elected in 1952. He had been forced to stand as an Independent having failed to win preselection by the Liberal party because he was over 65 years old.
25. Summaries of the Development of the Save the Forests Campaign 1944-1945 and 1944-1958, in *Inaug & Dev*, *op cit*, note 12, p. 7 and p. 9 respectively. The 1945 *Publications and Activities: Save the Forests Victorian Campaign*, also provided useful details.
26. C E Isaac makes reference to this book in *Forest Policy*, *op cit*, note 5, p. 5.
27. C T Clark (ed), *Victorian Forest Facts*, Save the Forests Campaign, Melbourne 1944. Quotes are from p. 4 [emphasis original], p. 5 and p. 14 respectively. School forestry was introduced through the "School Endowment Plantation Scheme" in 1924 (under the direction of Frank Tate). It was abolished in 1988. (Lewis Godfrey, pers. comm. 8/6/90).
28. Over the centuries, there has been a long tradition of linking timber-getting with wartime success. John Evelyn, who has been described as the 'father of forestry', in his 1664 treatise, *Silva: A Discourse of Forest Trees*, expressed concern for the nation's "wooden walls" (as he colourfully termed the navy), and urged the Royal Society of London (of which he was Secretary), to study the question of timber and national power. This is discussed by Clarence J. Glacken, in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the end of the Eighteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967, p. 485.
29. Summary of the Development of the Save the Forests Campaign 1944-1958, in *Inaug & Dev*, *op cit*, note 12, p. 9.
30. *loc cit*
31. Stretton (1939), *op cit*, note 1; C A Daw, 'Fire - Destroyer of Resources', *Victoria's Resources*, 1(4), 1959/1960, pp. 10-11.
32. *Charlton Tribune*, 29 August, 1947.
33. C E Isaac (ed.), *An Inseparable Trinity*, Save the Forests Campaign, Melbourne, 1950. p. 14.
34. Nan Oates, unpublished notes on the History of the NRCL, p. 4.
35. *An Inseparable Trinity*, *op cit*, note 33, pp.22-23.
36. *ibid*, pp. 13, 20-23

37. *Inaug & Dev*, *op cit*, note 12, p. 9.
38. Reprinted in *An Inseparable Trinity*, *op cit*, note 33, p. 9.
39. *Victoria: Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into Forest Grazing*, [L.E.B. Stretton], Government Printer, Melbourne, 1946.
40. *Inaug & Dev*, (*op cit*, note 12), p. 9.
41. It is significant that in his *Brief History of Soil Conservation in Victoria* (*op cit*, note 5), George Thompson recalls that the name change to Natural Resources Conservation League "provide[d] a widening of scope of the organisation" (p. 101). The Soil Conservation Authority replacing the earlier Soil Conservation Board commenced operations on 16 February 1950 (p. 48).
42. G T Thompson, C E Isaac, M Nielsen, L C Edgar and R J Mathews, *Highlights of the "Save the Forests" Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria 1944-1965 [Highlights]*, NRCL, Springvale, 1965, p. 3.
43. Executive Meeting 25 February 1988.
44. W L Grauer, interview 23/11/89, reported that A E Wilkie had told him this story, though it was not recorded in the written minutes. Joyce Wilkie also recalled the hammering opposite, and her husband's quick action to ensure that the Campaign did not miss its chance (pers. comm. 11/5/90).
45. The original building has been retained, but has an altered roof line, and has brick veneer walls.

Chapter 2

Notes

Many of the personal details in this chapter have been passed on to me by Cyril Isaac's daughter, Edna Smith, in an interview 20/2/90. She has also donated a collection of manuscript, typescript and printed papers to the State Library of Victoria, to which I have referred.

The League has published two biographical tributes to Isaac over the years which provide more information about his later life:

C M Ewart, "A Story of Fifty Years in Public Life", *Conservation News*, Feb. 1956, p.7. (On the occasion of his award of "Officer of the British Empire" (OBE), 1 January, 1956.)

G T Thompson, "Vale ... C E Isaac", *Victoria's Resources*, 7(3), 1965. (Obituary)

1. "Dandenong Meeting Expresses Confidence in Hon. C E Isaac, MLC" *Dandenong Journal*, 5 June 1946.

2. Victoria: *Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into Forest Grazing*, [L E B Stretton], Government Printer, Melbourne, 1946.
3. 'Teacher Tells' column by Peter Tabard, *The Herald*, 6.4.66.
4. Brian Lloyd, *Gold at the Ten Mile*, Shoestring Bookshop, Wangaratta, 1978. p. 144.
5. Meeting November 1909, as reported in the 'Jubilee of Victorian State Schools Horticultural Society', *Educational Magazine*, Vol. 17(8), September 1960.
6. J E Menadue, *A Centenary History of the Australian Natives' Association 1871-1971*, ANA (Horticultural Press Pty. Ltd.), Melbourne, no date, pp. 337-339.
7. Manuscript by A W Vroland, C E Isaac Papers, State Library of Victoria.
8. Manuscript Biographical Note, C E Isaac Papers, State Library of Victoria and G M Hibbins, *A History of the City of Springvale: Constellation of Communities*, City of Springvale/Lothian Publishing, Springvale, 1984.
9. Edna Smith (pers. comm.); S B Watkins, Article in unnamed journal, April 1969, "The Variegated Lilly-Pilly", C E Isaac Papers, State Library of Victoria; *Victoria's Resources*, Vol. 6, Nos. 3 and 4, 1964/5.

Chapter 3

Notes

1. C E Isaac, "Notes submitted to Executive by the Honorary Director - 1946. Discussion of Research Nursery", Unpublished typescript, NRCL Archives, p. 2 (Item 6) [emphasis original]
2. *ibid*, p. 1 (Item 2).
3. *loc cit*, (Item 4).
4. *ibid*, p. 2 (Item 9).
5. C M Ewart, "History of the NRCL Nursery", *Victoria's Resources*, 1(1), March 1959, p. 29.
6. *loc cit*; also C E Isaac "Tree-Planting and Conservation - Broadcast No. 2", Transcript of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives; Wilkie's employment details were recorded in the Minutes of the Executive Committee 22 October 1958, p. 2. Joyce Wilkie supplied the information about the other workers at the early nursery at Isaac's, the arrangements at Wilkie's nursery and Wilkie's qualifications (pers. comm. 11/5/90).
7. Copies of titles are held at NRCL, Springvale South.
8. This was the ostensible reason for the move as recorded in the

Executive Minutes of 1951. However, there is no doubt (from Isaac's original arguments for the foundation of the nursery) that Isaac wanted Nursery and Office united in purpose and public profile.

9. C E Isaac, Broadcast No. 2 (*ibid*), p. 1.
10. Interview with Matt Mathews, Lance Edgar and others, 23/11/89. Tape in possession of the author. Additional comments from letters to the author from Bill Grauer (23/5/90) and Matt Mathews (5/6/90).
11. C E Isaac (Honorary Director) and L C Edgar (Nursery Manager), "The Nursery of the Natural Resources Conservation League", *Victoria's Resources*, 3(1), 1961, 16-17.
12. Bill Grauer, letter to author 17/5/90.
13. *ibid*
14. Matt Mathews, interview 23/11/89.
15. C E Isaac, "How Trees can be obtained from the Conservation League's Nursery", Broadcast No. 3, Transcript of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives.
16. C E Isaac, "The League's Field Work", Broadcast No. 18, Transcript of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives. Don Menadue was initially appointed to this position. (Minutes of Executive, 14 April 1955).
17. C M Ewart, Minutes of Half-Yearly Meeting, 24 September 1958, NRCL, Springvale. See also Minutes of the Special Meeting of Executive held 30 July 1958 "to consider the resignation of Mr A E Wilkie, Manager of the League"; and Obituary, *Victoria's Resources*, Vol 11(4), Dec 1969-Feb 1970, p. 25.
18. The upgraded title of "Manager" (including Secretary and Publicity Officer) was approved at the Executive meeting, 14 April 1955. The first amendment to the Articles of Association was not formally ratified by Parliament until 24 March 1966, but a decision was taken in the late 50s that the Executive should be ultimately responsible for the direction of all staff.
19. Matt Mathews, interview 23/11/90.
20. C E Isaac, *Growing Eucalypts in Tubes for Community Planting*, Pamphlet issued by the Save the Forests Campaign (Leaflet 2/48).
21. Isaac and Edgar (*op cit*, note 9), p. 17.
22. Bill Grauer, letter to author, 17/5/90.
23. *An Inseparable Trinity*, NRCL 1950, pp. 19 and 29.
24. "The League and Naturalisation Ceremonies", *Conservation News*, February 1958, p. 7.
25. Nomination for membership of the C E Isaac Avenue of Honour for Bob Joyce, NRCL Archives, Springvale South.

26. Brian Craig and Peter Rendle, pers. comms. 11/5/90 and 16/5/90 respectively.
27. *An Inseparable Trinity*, NRCL 1950, p. 25.
28. Save the Forests Campaign, "Trees Supplied for Soldier Settlers", *The Journal of Agriculture*, July 1948, p. 323.
29. "Free trees for Migrant Farmers" (in English, Italian, Dutch and German), *Victoria's Resources*, 3(3), 1961, p. 96.
30. Lecture to Royal Society of Victoria, 14/6/90, by Bob Edgar, Land Protection Division of the Department of Conservation and Environment, and Angus Howell, Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group.
31. L Santer and G Scurfield (Forest Products Division, CSIRO), "CSIRO Research at NRCL, Springvale South", *Victoria's Resources*, 5(3), Sept-Nov 1963, p. 81.
32. Malcolm Calder, pers. comm. 12/10/90; *Mistletoe in Victoria: A Review*, by R W Eager and D M Calder, University of Melbourne Botany School, Parkville, 1978; D M Calder, "Mistletoes in Victoria" *Trees and Victoria's Resources*, 23(4), 1981, pp 7-12; *The Biology of Mistletoes*, edited by Malcolm Calder and Peter Bernhardt, Academic Press, Sydney, 1983.
33. Les Schultz, pers. comm. 16/5/90; 10/10/90.
34. *Annual Report*, 1984, p. 17.
35. *Annual Report*, 1978, p. 8.
36. *Annual Report*, 1983, p. 13.
37. Figures as at June 1990, courtesy Peter Rendle.
38. From the Annual Statements of Accounts published in *An Inseparable Trinity*, 1950; and the *Annual Report*, 1988.
39. The number of trees distributed by the League (and the Campaign) from its inception to the end of 1989 was 21,880,163.

Chapter 4

Notes

1. G T Thompson, C E Isaac, M Nielsen, L C Edgar and R J Mathews, *Highlights of the "Save the Forests" Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria 1944-1965 [Highlights]*, NRCL, Springvale, 1965, p. 4; G T Thompson, Manuscript Notes, NRCL Archives, Springvale p. 2; "Plan for Education in Tree Planting" and "Ten Thousand Pounds Needed", *Victoria's Resources*, 2(3), 1960.
2. *Annual Report*, 1958, NRCL, Springvale; Young Farmers' Clubs:

- C E Isaac "Tree-Planting and Conservation - Young Farmers' Clubs - Broadcast No. 16", Transcript of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives; Bill Grauer, letter to author, 7/12/89; Minutes of NRCL's Executive Committee, 17 July 1958.
3. "Plan for Education in Tree Planting" and "Ten Thousand Pounds Needed", *Victoria's Resources*, 2(3), 1960; J R Joyce, "The Natural Resources Education Centre", *Victoria's Resources*, 3(2), 1961.
 4. G T Thompson, "Conservation Classes at Educational Centre", *Victoria's Resources*, 3(1), 1961.
 5. Items from *Annual Reports*, 1963-1968.
 6. Letter from G T Thompson to A W Knight, MLC, 8 June 1964; Bill Grauer pers. comm. 3/5/90.
 7. C E Isaac "Tree-Planting and Conservation - School Arbor Days - Broadcast No. 15", Transcript of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives.
 8. *ibid*, p. 2.
 9. "Proposed Junior Tree Lovers' League", *Victoria's Resources*, 3(4), 1961/2.
 10. *ibid*; The Director of Education was the first President of the League of Youth in the 1930s. See J McRae, "The League of Youth", *Gum Tree*, September 1935, pp 28-29, for more information about the aims and purposes of the League of Youth.
 11. Bill Grauer, a member of the deputation, reported this in an interview 23/11/89 [Tape in possession of the author].
 12. Bill Grauer, interview 23/11/89.
 13. Matt Mathews, interview 23/11/89.
 14. In the years 1962-1984 (inclusive), 781,000 trees were distributed according to the relevant *Annual Reports*. The Junior Tree Lovers' League figures were not separated from other "Community purposes" after that time.
 15. The fourth member, Charles Ewart, died in 1961 after a long illness. The Forests Commission, of which he had been Commissioner, was represented on the Junior Tree Lovers' League Committee by another Commissioner, A L Benallack. Ewart had been appointed Director of the NRCL on Isaac's retirement from that post in 1961, but had been unable to take up the position because of ill health. It fell to another member of the editorial committee, George Thompson, to take up the Director's position in March 1962.
 16. From the programme for the Exhibition, the exhibits were as follows:

State Government

Victorian Railways, Department of Agriculture, SRWSC, Forests Commission, CRB (in association with CSIRO), CFA, Lands Department (Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Branch), SCA, Gas and Fuel Corporation, Fisheries and Game Department, Housing Commission, SEC, Botanic Gardens, Mines Department.

Commonwealth Government

CSIRO - Division of Forest Products.

Industry

Willcox Mofflin Ltd & Mining Supplies (SA); Australian Paper Manufacturers (APM).

Local Government

Murray Valley Development League.

NRCL

Two exhibits were: "From Tiny Seed to Forest Giant" and "Man's dependency on the resources of the earth".

17. *Annual Report*, 1958, NRCL, Springvale South; the Minutes of the Executive Committee, 17 July 1958, stated that 9,250 had been distributed and that 4,500 (approx.) remained in stock.
18. From the first "Foreword" by H E Bolte, Premier of Victoria, *Victoria's Resources*, 1(1), March 1959, p.3.; The lack of regularity in the publication of *Conservation News* was sometimes the result of deliberate policy decisions. For example, the Minutes of the Executive Committee 25 September 1957 record that the August issue of *Conservation News* had been cancelled so that the costs saved could be spent on *Natural Resources of Victoria*.
19. This was explicitly stated by Isaac in *Natural Resources of Victoria*, p. 4, but was also fundamental to *Victoria's Resources*.
20. *Victoria's Resources*, 6(2), 1964.
21. *Victoria's Resources*, Dec 1968 - Sept 1971 (inclusive).
22. *Man, the Earth and Tomorrow*, D C White and C S Elliott (eds), Cassell/NRCL, 1969; *Annual Report*, 1969, 1970, NRCL, Springvale South.
23. Bill Grauer, pers. comm. 3/5/90.

Chapter 5

Notes

1. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, edited by J A Simpson and E S C Weiner, Vol III, pp 764-5 lists 1922 as the earliest use in Britain of the term "conservation" as "preservation of the environment,

esp. natural resources". The 1922 listing was in the context of the "conservation movement in America" (in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*). The next listed use was 1958. Max Nicholson in *The Environmental Revolution* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1970), has described in detail the processes by which the term "conservation" crossed the Atlantic from America to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s (ie long after it was used commonly in Australia).

2. In his book *The Fight for Conservation*, (1910, reprinted Seattle, Univ. Washington Press, 1967; p. 42), Pinchot claimed to have originated the term "conservation", but as Susan R. Schrepfer has noted in *The Fight to Save the Redwoods* (Madison, Univ. Wisconsin Press, 1983; p. 11), this is not strictly true. However, its use in popular parlance was no doubt facilitated by the formation of the Conservation League, and also Roosevelt's National Conservation Commission (1909). (See Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, pp. 138, 141.)
3. Terence J Johnson, *Professions and Power*, London, Macmillan, 1972; esp. pp. 9, 12.
4. "Forest consciousness" was advocated as early as 1894 in New South Wales by W. MacDonald (Forester), *Our Timber Trees and Forest Culture*, Department of Agriculture, New South Wales; Sydney, Government Printer; June 1894; pp 1-3. Dr C S Sutton, in "The League in other States", *Gum Tree*, 5(14), June 1920, p. 4, also specifically mentions this.
5. Tony Dingle, *The Victorians: Settling*, McMahon's Point, Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, 1984; "Irrigation" pp 119-124.
6. *Ibid.*, pp.125-127.
7. George Thompson, *A Brief History of Soil Conservation in Victoria - 1834-1961*, SCA, Melbourne, 1979. Thompson was a young engineer working for the SRWSC in the Mallee from 1921 to 1923. He was influenced by senior engineers (especially Alfred Stephen Kenyon) to direct his attention to soil erosion.
8. Patrick O'Shaughnessy, *Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Catchment Management Policies: A History and Analysis of their Development*, CRES Working Paper 1986/28, the Australian National University, Canberra 1986; Tom Griffiths, *Fire, Water, Timber and Gold: A History of the Melbourne East Study Area*, Report to the Land Conservation Council, Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, Melbourne, 1989, p. 65.
9. Thompson, *op cit*, note 7, pp. 20-23; Also Dingle, *op cit*, note 5, p. 245.

10. *Age*, Feb 23, 1978, p. 4. (From the Biographical File for A D Butcher, State Library of Victoria).
11. See Journal Index, pp. 134-139; In addition, many of the other issues dealt with matters relating to National Parks or with particular National Parks (eg Vol 12 (1), 1970 on the Little Desert).
12. The first Director of National Parks, Philip Crosbie Morrison, had a Master of Science degree in Zoology.
13. Max Nicholson, *The Environmental Revolution*, op. cit. note 1, p. 32.
14. *Conservation News*, 15 February 1955, p. 3. The radio stations were 3BO, 3GL, 3HA, 3NE, 3SH, 3SR, 3TR, 3UL and 3YB.
15. C E Isaac, "Conservation is everybody's business" - Broadcast No. 49, Transcript of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives.
16. Transcripts of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives. The LUAC was set up under the *Soil Conservation and Land Utilization Act* of 1950 to consider the problems of water catchments, but its powers were greatly extended and its emphasis shifted to the management of all public lands through a Premier's directive in April 1966. (See R G Downes, *The Land Utilization Advisory Council: Its functions and responsibilities*, pamphlet originally published Nov. 1966, reprinted June 1968; D W Goode papers, Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria).
17. *Victoria's Resources*, 16(4).
18. *Age*, 11 Sept 1984, p. 5; *An Inseparable Trinity*, NRCL, 1950, pp 24-25.
19. *Age*, 11 Sept 1984, p. 5.
20. Dewar Goode, Interview with Libby Robin, 20 November 1989, p. 1 of Transcript. (Tape and transcript held by the author.)
21. D W Goode, *Trees and Natural Resources*, 31(1), March 1989, pp. 26-28. This was only one of many articles published on conservation subjects. Goode also wrote articles for the *Melbourne Age*, the *Adelaide Advertiser*, and the local papers in Hamilton and Coleraine.
22. Max Nicholson, *The New Environmental Age*, Cambridge, England, CUP, 1987, p. 113.
23. Goode, Interview 20/11/89, p. 9 of Transcript; Libby Robin, "Visions of Nature: *Wild Life 1938-1954*", *The Victorian Naturalist*, 102(5), Sept/Oct 1985, 153-161.
24. *National Parks Act*, No. 6023, 30 October 1956.
25. G Blackburn, R D Bond and A R P Clarke, *Soil Development in Relation to Stranded Beach Ridges of County Lowan, Victoria*, Soil Publication No. 24, CSIRO, Melbourne 1967.

26. A short resume of the events leading to the proposal to open the Little Desert to settlement may be found in the Little Desert Settlement Committee, *Report upon the Proposal to open the Little Desert to Settlement* (Together with Appendices), Legislative Council, Melbourne, 17 March 1970, pp 5-9. [The Little Desert Settlement Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of The Hon J W Galbally, by the Opposition parties (Labor and Country Party) to review the scheme in the Legislative Council (where they held a majority)].
27. Wimmera Regional Committee, *Need for Reservations in Desert Settlement*, Horsham 1964.
28. William McDonald's address to the Kaniva Shire Council on 28 June 1967 was reported in the *Weekly Times*.
29. Little Desert Settlement Committee, *op cit*, note 26, Appendix C, p. 17.
30. Wimmera Regional Committee, *Need for Reservations in Desert Settlement*, Horsham 1964, pp 47-48.
31. *loc cit*
32. R G Downes, *op cit*, note 16.
33. Little Desert Settlement Committee, *op cit*, note 26, Appendix F, p. 24.
34. Save Our Bushlands Action Committee, *Save Our Bushland*, A Record of the Proceedings of the Public Meeting held in the Lower Melbourne Town Hall and Scots Church Hall on the evening of Friday 29 August 1969.
35. Gwynnyth Taylor, pers. comm. 16/4/90.
36. Gwynnyth Taylor, pers. comm. 16/4/90.
37. Bill Grauer, interview 23/11/89.
38. Save Our Bushlands Action Committee, *A Bushlands Magna Carta*, Melbourne, October, 1969.
39. The Hon G L Chandler, Minister of Agriculture, Ministerial Statement, Victorian *Hansard*, Council, 9 December 1969, p. 2563.
40. *Victoria's Resources*, 12(1), March 1970, p. 3.
41. Land Conservation Council, *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Use*, Melbourne July 1988, p. 41.
42. *National Parks Act* (1975).
43. *National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Act* (7/1988).
44. CCV News, *Victoria's Resources*, 12(3), 1970.
45. Lewis Godfrey, Interview, 23/11/89.
46. *Victoria's Resources*, 15(1), 1973, p. 32 and 15(2), 1973, inside front cover.
47. Ian Cowdell, "A History of the Roadsides Conservation Committee", Typescript held at NRCL, (circa 1989).

48. Soil and Water Conservation Committee: *Victoria's Resources*, 16(3), Sept 1974; Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers: *Trees and Victoria's Resources*, 25(1), March 1983 p. 31 (started October 1982).
49. C E Isaac, "Tree Planting and Conservation" - Broadcast No. 50, Transcript of 1955 radio broadcasts held in NRCL Archives. [emphasis original]

Epilogue

Notes

1. Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, London, Dent, 1986; p. 29.
2. R G Downes, "What Conservation Means Today", first published in *Victoria's Resources*, Vol 10(1), March 1968; this excerpt also reprinted in *Victoria's Resources*, Vol 18(2), June 1976, p. 13.

Abbreviations used in the text

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
AFL	Australian Forest League
AMP	Australian Mutual Provident (Society)
ANA	Australian Natives' Association
APM	Australian Paper Manufacturers (Ltd) (Since 1986, a subsidiary of AMCOR)
APPU	Australian Primary Producers' Union
CCV	Conservation Council of Victoria
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CRB	Country Roads Board (since 1989, VicRoads)
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (1926 - 1949)
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (from 1949 until the present)
CWA	Country Women's Association
<i>Highlights</i>	<i>Highlights of the "Save the Forests" Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria 1944-1965</i> , NRCL, Springvale, 1965.
<i>ibid</i>	see previous reference
<i>Inaug & Dev</i>	<i>Inauguration and Development of the Save the Forests Campaign and the Natural Resources Conservation League</i> , NRCL, Springvale 1959
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LCC	Land Conservation Council (1970 onwards)
<i>loc cit</i>	see previous reference, same page
LIAC	Land Utilisation Advisory Council (1950 - 1970)
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly (the Lower House in Victorian State Parliament)
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council (the Upper House in Victorian State Parliament)
MMBW	Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (also known since 1988 as the Board of Works)
MP	Member of Parliament
NRCL	Natural Resources Conservation League
<i>op cit</i>	see reference previously cited (at note n)
RCC	Roadsides Conservation Committee

SCA	Soil Conservation Authority (1950 - 1982)
SCB	Soil Conservation Board (1940 - 1949)
SEC	State Electricity Commission
SRWSC	State Rivers and Water Supply Commission
VNPA	Victorian National Parks Association
VSSHS	Victorian State Schools' Horticultural Society

Conversions

During the period of the NRCL's history, Australia has decimalised currency and metricated weights and measurements. In the text I have used the form of money, weight and measurement appropriate to the period I am discussing. This is especially important for money, for while one pound was equal to two dollars in 1966 when conversion occurred, 1940s pounds had a very different value from 1990s dollars because of inflation.

one pound (£) = two dollars (\$) (1966)

one inch = 2.54 cm

one foot = 30.5 cm (approx)

one yard = 0.914 m

one mile = 1.61 km

one acre = 0.405 hectare

one mile = 2.59 km

one ounce = 28.3 gm

one pound (lb) = 0.454 kg

one ton = 1.02 tonne

The Cyril Isaac Avenue of Honour

The Cyril Isaac Avenue of Honour was established at the Cranbourne Nursery in 1986 and dedicated in 1989 to honour some of the many individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the League over the years. The names below are listed alphabetically, and the number in brackets after each entry corresponds to the number of the tree dedicated in their honour.

Boardman, Bert. President 1970 and 1971; A practical farmer and naturalist who served on the League's executive for over 20 years. He was the initiator of several of the League's practical research ideas including mistletoe research in the 1970s and the issue of ringbarking of trees by stock in the 1980s and 1990s (see p. 56). (Tree No 16)

Browne, Don. President 1950 and 1951. (Tree No 7)

Cameron, Kay, OBE President 1974 and 1975; Long-serving member of Executive and representative of the Country Women's Association. (Tree No 17)

Clancy, John (Jack). President 1968 and 1969; Kilmore Shire Councillor and Chairman of the first major Public Meeting of the Save Our Bushlands Action Committee (see p. 94). (Tree No 15)

Douglas, Geoff. President 1976 and 1977; Director 1979-1985; Agricultural Scientist and former Chairman of the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board. (Tree No 18)

Edgar, Lance. Director 1975-1979; the first Director to be appointed from the League's own staff (served on staff from 1951-1975, as nursery foreman, Nursery Manager, Executive Officer and Assistant Director); Lance Edgar was a great contributor to the League's publications programs, especially the journal *Victoria's Resources*. (Tree No 24)

Elliott, Sibley. Director 1972-1975; a scientist with the CSIRO's Forest Products Division who worked as the League's Honorary Organiser and Editor of *Victoria's Resources* before becoming Director. (Tree No 25)

Fleming, Bill. President 1960 and 1961. (Tree No 11)

Gepp, Sir Herbert. Founding Member of the Save the Forests Campaign and instigator of the first Forestry Exhibition in the Melbourne Town Hall in 1943. The meeting which set the agenda for the Campaign was held at his home in 1944. (See p. 8). Gepp was a senior industrialist, trained at a metallurgical engineer, who had strong contacts in both federal and state government departments through his work as Chairman of the Commonwealth Development and Migration Commission. His interest in the development of Forest Products industries in Australia began with his work on electro-chemical production of Zinc in Tasmania and was fostered

by a trip to the USA in 1919. He later became Managing Director of APM. (Tree No 26)

Gilmore, Jack. Representative of the Soil Conservation Authority on the Executive and Vice-President of the League 1978, 1982 and 1983. (Tree No 27)

Godfrey, Lewis. Member of the Executive in the 1940s representing the Education Department's Schools Forestry Division. Later returned to the staff of the League on his retirement from the Education Department in 1968; seconded as the first Secretary of the Conservation Council of Victoria (See pp. 95-96). (Tree No 33)

Goode, Dewar. President 1962 and 1963; Practical farmer and internationally respected conservationist (see p. 90). (Tree No 12)

Grauer, Bill. President 1978 and 1979 and member of Executive from the early 1950s until 1981. Director of the School Forestry Section of the Victorian Education Department and a great promoter of conservation for young people. The series "Keeping the Earth Fit for Man", published in *Victoria's Resources* for use in schools was his idea. (Tree No 19)

Gray, Harold. President 1980 and 1981. (Tree No 20)

Grose, Ron. President 1986 and 1987; Senior Forester and former Treasurer of the League. (Tree No 23)

Isaac, Cyril, OBE. Founder, Honorary Organiser and Honorary Director until 1962; President 1955 and 1956 (See Ch. 2). (Tree No 1)

Jackson, Ernest, 'Watershed'. Farmer and irrigation conservationist who ran the League's film unit for many years (See p. 89). (Tree No 28)

Jessop, John. President, Save the Forests Campaign, 1944. Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works and instigator of the "Wallaby Lodge" conference (See p. 7). (Tree No 3)

Jones, Alan. President 1964 and 1965. (Tree No 13)

Joyce, Bob. Represented the Country Roads Board on the League's Executive for over 20 years, and promoted tree-planting on the State's Highways and Freeways. He was also instrumental in establishing the "live-in" short courses at the League's Headquarters in Springvale. (Tree No 29)

Laver, Dorothy. President 1957, 1958 and 1959; the only person to serve three consecutive terms as President, she was a great supporter of the League over three decades, serving on the Executive until 1981. Dorothy Laver was well known as a Camberwell Shire Councillor. (Tree No 10)

Lyford, Bill. President 1966 and 1967. (Tree No 14)

McBride, David. President, Save the Forests Campaign, 1944 and Vice-President of the Municipal Association of Victoria. (Tree No 2)

MacNeil, Neil. President 1945 and 1946; Headmaster of Wesley College

and great supporter of Forestry in schools. (Tree No 4)

Mathews, Matt. Staff member for 35 years (See Ch. 3). (Tree No 32)

Neilson, Margaret. Staff member for 25 years (See p. 43). (Tree No 30)

Owens, John. First Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the Save The Forests Campaign; Also Assistant Curator Parks and Gardens, City of Melbourne. (Tree No 31)

Paterson, Austen. President 1952. (Tree No 8)

Say, William. President 1946 and 1947; Benalla Shire Councillor and irrigation conservationist.

Taylor, Rosemary. President 1948 and 1949; first woman President. (Tree No 6)

Thompson, George, OBE. President 1953 and 1954; 1972 and 1973; Director 1962-1972; Well-known for his work as Chairman of the Soil Conservation Authority. (Tree No 9)

Thwaites, Bill, OBE. President 1984 and 1985; Farmer and Shire Councillor, represented the West Gippsland Region on the Executive for many years. (Tree No 22)

Trembath, Leon. President 1982 and 1983. (Tree No 21)

Wilkie, Alex. First Nursery Manager and later Manager of the League. Well-known for his work in rural Victoria promoting tree planting (See pp. 44-45). (Tree No 34)

The Journal

The aim of this “index” is to give a flavour of the major concerns of the League through the eyes of its regular publications from October 1954 until March 1990. It is not intended to be an exhaustive index of the journals.

Victoria's Resources was published quarterly from Volume 1, Number 1, March 1959 until Volume 22, Number 4, December 1980, when it was renamed *Trees and Victoria's Resources* but the volume numbering continued uninterrupted (Volume 23, Number 1, March 1981). A second name change to *Trees and Natural Resources* also continued the numbering (Volume 27, Number 1, March, 1985). In view of the unambiguous volume numbering our references simply show Volume(V) and Number(n) in the following form: V(n). Where the earlier publications, *NRCL News* (1954) and *Conservation News* (1955-58) cover a theme they are listed as NN and CN respectively, with the appropriate date.

Themes are listed alphabetically. Only themes covering a whole issue have been included, except where there was no overall theme for the journal (common in the 1980s), where the articles headlined on the front cover have been referenced under general headings. Some references are listed two or more times, once under the specific title of the theme of the journal and also under the general heading which has been subsumed in it. (eg “More about National Parks” is listed as such, and also cross-referenced under “National Parks”). Where no articles were “headlined” (eg Vol 27(4), 1985), there is no reference in the list below.

NB Later volumes have a full author/title index for the year published in part 4 of the Volume concerned, commencing with Vol 22, 1980. [The exception is Vol 25, 1983, the index of which appears in Vol 26 (4).]

Journal Themes

- Acid Rain, 26 (1), 1984.
- Agriculture, 1 (3), 1959.
- Agroforestry, 28 (4), 1986.
- Alpine Environment, 2 (2) and (3), 1960; 13 (2), 1971; 21 (4), 1979.
- Animals, 8 (2), 1966.
- Ararat, 3 (3), 1961.
- Australian Birds, 24 (1), 1982, 27 (2), 1985.
- Barwon Region Convention, 3 (4), 1961.
- Benalla, 3 (3), 1961.
- Birds (See also Australian Birds, Native Birds) 30 (1) & (3), 1988.
- Bushfires and National Parks, 13 (4), 1971. (See also Fire Prevention and Control; National Parks)
- Butterflies, 29 (3) 1987.
- Castlemaine, 2 (4), 1960.
- Catchment Control and Management, CN Feb. 1957, 4 (3), 1962; 10 (2), 1968; 23 (2), 1981; 30 (4), 1988.
- Cities, 30 (1), 1988.
- Coastal Resources 13 (3), 1971, 15 (3), 1973, 18 (3), 1976; 20 (3), 1978; 30 (3), 1988.
- Conservation 7 (2), 1965; 10 (1), 1968; 12 (2), 1970; 14 (2), 1972; 17 (3), 1975; 18 (2), 1976; 19 (2), 1977.
- Conservation and People 17 (3), 1975.
- Conservation Philosophies, 18 (2), 1976.
- Container Deposit Legislation, 25 (2), 1983.
- Corangamite Regional Convention 9 (2), 1967.
- Country Environment, 3 (1), 1961; 16 (4), 1974; 17 (4), 1975.
- Country Fire Authority, CN Nov. 1955; 1 (4), 1959.
- Crown Land Legislation, 30 (2), 1988.
- Crown Land Management, 17 (2), 1975; 30 (2), 1988.
- Direct Seeding, 29 (3) 1987.
- Drought, 25 (1), 1983.

Earth Day, 14(3), 1972; 16(3), 1974.
 East Gippsland Convention, CN May, 1957.
 Echuca, 2(4), 1960.
 Employment and Conservation, 25(3), 1983.
 Environmental Education 12(4), 1970; 30(1), 1988.
 Environmental Weeds, 29(2) 1987.
 Estuaries and Coastal Lagoons, 15(3), 1973; 30(3), 1988.
 Eucalypts and Acacias, 7(3), 1965.

 Farm Energy, 22(1), 1980.
 Farm Woodlots and Shelter Belts, 7(2), 1965; 24(1), 1982; 26(3), 1984; 27(2), 1985; 29(4) 1987.
 Feral Animals, 6(3), 1964; 23(2), 1981.
 Fire Prevention and Control 4(1), 1962; 7(3), 1965; 13(4), 1971, 19(3), 1977; 24(4), 1982; 25(1), (3), (4), 1983; 26(4), 1984; 29(3) 1987.
 Firewood, 29(1) 1987.
 Fishing, 31(3), 1989.
 Fodder Trees, 25(3) 1983; 27(1) 1985; 29(1) 1987.
 Forest Industry and Conservation 14(2), 1972: 17(1), 1975.
 Forestry, 1(3), 1959; 3(2), 1961; 6(3), 1964; 17(1), 1975; 7(2) and (3), 1965; 27(3), 1985, 28(3), 1986; 30(4), 1988; 31(4), 1989.
 Forestry Education, CN Feb, 1956.
 Frankston, 2(3), 1960.
 From the Ashes of Disaster (25th Anniversary Issue), 18(4), 1976.
 Fur, Feathers and Forest, 22(2), 1980.

 Glenelg Convention, CN Aug. 1956.
 Grampians Forum, 18(1), 1976.
 Greenhouse Effect, 31(1), 1989.
 Groundcovers, 29(2), 1987.
 Groundwater, 25(2), 1983.

 Habitat, 22(2), 1980; 26(4), 1984.
 Hamilton, 2(2), 1960.
 Hiking, 31(3), 1989.
 Horsham, 2(3), 1960.

 Indigenous Species, 30(2), 1988.

Inter-tidal Zone, 18 (3), 1976.

Insect Pests, 4 (2), 1962.

Keep Australia Beautiful, 11 (2), 1969.

Land Restoration, 21 (3), 1979.

Land Use Forum, 16 (2), 1974.

Land-Use Planning, 12 (1), 1970; 16 (2), 1974; 17 (2), 1975.

Landscape Preservation, 3 (1), 1961; 9 (1) and (2), 1967.

Linear Crown Frontages, 31 (2), 1989.

Little Desert, 12 (1), 1970.

Managing the Coast, 20 (3), 1978.

Maryborough, 3 (2), 1961.

Micropropagation, 26 (2), 1984.

Minerals for People, 22 (4), 1980.

More about National Parks, 14 (1), 1972.

Mornington, 4 (3), 1962.

Morwell, 2 (2), 1960.

Municipal Tree Planting, CN May 1956; 23 (3), 1981; 26 (3), 1984.

National Parks CN Feb. 1956; 4 (4), 1962; 7 (4), 1965; 10 (3), 1968; 13 (4), 1971; 14 (1), 1972; 16 (1), 1974; 21 (1), 1979; 23 (3), 1981; 24 (1), 1982; 31 (3), 1989.

National Parks - An Australian Centenary, 21 (1), 1979.

Native Birds, 7 (1) and (2), 1965; 24 (1), 1982.

Native Grasses, 29 (2), 1987.

Natural Resources Conservation League - Aims/Philosophies etc, NN Oct, 1954, CN Feb. 1958; 3 (4), 1961; 18 (2), 1976.

Natural Resources of Victoria - General, Vols. 1, 2, 3 all parts.

Nature Reserves for Recreation, 6 (4), 1964.

Open Space, 10 (4), 1968.

Organ Pipes National Park, 24 (1), 1982.

Our Vanishing Wetlands, 15 (1), 1973.

Pest and Weed Control, 4 (2), 1962; 14 (4), 1972; 29 (2), 1987.

Pistachios, 26 (1), 1984.

Pollution of the Environment 9(4), 1967.
 Portland, 3(3), 1961.
 Problems of Streams and Stream Frontages, 6(3), 1964, 19(1), 1977; 28(3), 1986.
 Railways, 31(2), 1989.
 Reclaimed Water, 26(3), 1984.
 Recreation, 30(1), 1988; 31(3), 1989.
 Regeneration, 27(1), 1985; 29(3), 1987.
 Remnant Vegetation, 29(2), 1987.
 Relationship of Industrial Development to Environment 12(3), 1970.
 Rivers, 31(2), 1989.
 Roadsides and Conservation, CN Nov. 1956; 6(3), 1964; 19(2), 1977; 22(4), 1980; 25(1), 1983; 30(2), 1988; 31(2), 1989.
 Rochester, 4(4), 1962.
 Role of the Tree 13(1), 1971.
 Royal Show 3(3), 1961.
 Salinity, 20(4), 1978; 22(3), 1980; 24(3), 1982; 25(1), 1983; 27(1), 1985; 32(1), 1990.
 Sand and Sand Reclamation, 26(2), 1984; 27(3), 1985.
 Scenic Environment, 17(4), 1975.
 Scouts, CN Aug. 1955.
 Soil Conservation, CN Feb 1956; 1(3), 1959; 2(3), 1960; 5(4), 1964; 8(3), 1966; 23(3), 1981; 25(2), 1983; 26(4), 1984.
 Stawell, 3(4), 1961.
 Summer Holidays, 11(4), 1969.
 Swan Hill, 3(1), 1961.
 Technology and Conservation, 25(2) and (4), 1983.
 Trees and Forests 8(4), 1966; 11(1), 1969; 13(1), 1971; 14(2), 1972; 17(1), 1975; 23(1), 1981; 24(2), 1982; 26(1) and (4), 1984.
 Tree Farming, 5(2) and (3), 1963. "Trees for People", 22(3), 1980; [Forum Review] 24(2), 1982.
 Tree Planting, NN Oct 1954, CN May, Aug. and Nov. 1955; 26(2), 1984; 27(3), 1985.
 Tree Planting in Agriculture, 20(1), 1978; 23(4), 1981; 24(1), (2) and (3), 1982.

Understanding Salinity, 20 (4), 1978.
 Understorey, 29 (2), 1987.
 Upper Murray Convention, CN, Aug. 1958.
 Urban Forestry and Waterways, 28 (3), 1986; 31 (4), 1989.

 Victoria - Garden State, 20 (2), 1978.
 Victoria's Water Resources, 15 (4), 1973, 19 (4), 1977.

 Wangaratta, 2 (1), 1960.
 Warrnambool, 2 (1), 1960.
 Waste Disposal and Reclamation 15 (2), 1973; 26 (3), 1984.
 Water Conservation, 2 (1), 1960; 6 (1), 1964; 9 (3), 1967, 15 (4), 1973, 19 (4), 1977; 21 (4), 1979; 26 (2), 1984.
 Water from the Top, 21 (4), 1979.
 Water Use in Victoria, 19 (4), 1977.
 Watershed Management, 27 (3), 1985.
 Western Port, 12 (3), 1970.
 Wetlands, 30 (1), 1988.
 Whole Farm Planning, 29 (4), 1987.
 Wildflowers, 6 (2) and (3), 1964.
 Wildlife, 5 (1), 1963; 11 (3), 1969; 21 (2), 1979.
 Wildlife as a Natural Resource, 5 (1), 1963.
 Wildlife in Victoria, 21 (2), 1979.
 Wimmera Regional Convention, 5 (3), 1963.
 Wonders of the Outdoors, 7 (2), 1965.

 Yarram, 3 (2), 1961.
 Young Farmers' Club, CN May, 1955.
[Up to and including Volume 32 (1), 1990]

Regional Conventions

“Regional Natural Resources Conventions” began in 1953, replacing the earlier “District Conservation Weeks”, which had been spread throughout a number of localities in a region. For example the “**North Loddon Conservation Week**”, held 23-27 October 1950, comprised activities held in Kerang, Quambatook, Koondrock, Cohuna, Gunbower, Pyramid Hill and Boort. It was felt that there were advantages in focusing activities on one centre. At the time, there were 13 Government administrative regions in the State, and the initial aim was to hold two conventions per year. In the 1960s a pattern developed of an annual two-day convention held in October. Generally one day was devoted to field trips and excursions, and the other to speakers and discussion.

- 1953 **Central Highlands** - held at Maryborough. (13 August)
Theme: “Reclamation of Waste Land in Old Mining Areas”.
- 1954 **Corangamite** - held at Camperdown. (29 April)
Theme: “Soldier Settlement in Relation to Soil Conservation”.
Mallee - held at Ouyen. (11 August)
Theme: “Wind Erosion Control”.
- 1955 **West Gippsland** (first two-day convention) (27-28 April)
Theme: Forestry; Base: Warragul.
27 April: Forests Commission lead inspections of Forests and Plantations in the region.
28 April: Discussion at Warragul.
Loddon (two-day convention) (August)
Theme: Soil Conservation; Base: Charlton.
Soil Conservation Authority excursion to sites of conservation interest; Visit to Charlton Community Forests planted eight years earlier.
- 1956 **Goulburn** (two-day convention) April.
Theme: Irrigation; Base: Shepparton.
State Rivers and Water Supply Commission excursion to irrigation sites in the Goulburn Valley.
Glenelg (30 August)
Theme: Regional Land Use; Base: Hamilton
Issue of *Conservation News* (August 1956), devoted to conservation issues in the Glenelg region contributed by a number of State Government authorities.
- 1957 **East Gippsland** - Bairnsdale
Issue of *Conservation News* (May 1956), devoted to conservation

issues in the East Gippsland region.

- 1958 **Upper Murray** - Wangaratta (9/10 September)
Issue of *Conservation News* (August 1958), devoted to conservation issues in the Upper Murray region.

In the period 1959-1962 regional contact was maintained through short features on particular country centres in *Victoria's Resources*.

In the second series of conventions, a range of resources in the regions were discussed, rather than focusing on a particular theme.

- 1963 **Wimmera** - Horsham. (15/16 May)
Inspection of Grampians catchment area and water supply works.
[The Wimmera Regional Committee, inspired by the success of this convention convened another one in 1964 at Nhill (at which the NRCL was represented) to discuss plans for the development of the Little Desert area for agricultural purposes. This was the first public discussion of the arguments which led to a major conservation battle in the late 1960s. (See Chapter 5)]
- 1964 **Upper Murray** - Wangaratta. (7/8 October)
Field Tour included the construction site of the Buffalo River Reservoir, Myrtleford Pine Plantations and Tobacco Research Station, a softwood sawmill in Bright and SEC soil conservation works at Tawonga Gap.
[Also: "Conservation Week" in **Sale** (19-23 October), which featured tree-plantings on the Canal Reserve (supervised by Lance Edgar from the League), shop window displays by various government departments, media coverage, and the highlight of the week, the declaration of Sale Wildlife Refuge.]
- 1965 **Upper Goulburn** - Alexandra (20/21 October)
Field tour included Goulburn River "Improvement Works", Rubicon Forest (regenerated since 1939 fires), Snob's Creek Fish Hatchery, Eildon Reservoir, SEC Hydro-electric Power Station.
- 1966 **Corangamite** - Colac (10/11 October)
Field trips were conducted to the Otway forest and Port Campbell.
[An extra field trip was arranged on 9 October to the land development scheme at Heytesbury.]
- 1967 **Mallee** - Swan Hill (30/31 October)
Attended by 500 people. A special feature was a visit to the new Folk Museum. The Field tour was to irrigation and dry farming areas.

- 1968 **West Gippsland** - Leongatha (17/18/19 October)
The extra day was used for a special tour to Wilsons Promontory National Park.
- 1969 **Central Highlands** - Castlemaine (23/24 October)
Field tour to Stewarts Creek experimental catchment area, Daylesford, and to Kaweka sanctuary, Castlemaine.
- [From 1970 "Forums" on current themes replaced Regional Natural Resources Conventions.]

Forums

In 1970, "Forums" on topical issues replaced "Regional Conventions" as an annual activity sponsored by the League.

- 1970 **Mornington Peninsula Conservation Forum** (16/17 April)
Addressed the problems arising from the proposal for major industrial development in Western Port. This was supported by a special issue of *Victoria's Resources*, Volume 12(3), "Our Environment".
- 1971 **Alpine Convention**
13 February, meeting in Melbourne at the National Herbarium.
19 February, meeting at the Mt Beauty Chalet.
20 February, Field Day in the High Country, inspecting sites of importance to the various interest groups represented which included: Soil Conservation, Grazing, Forestry, Tourism, the Australian Conservation Foundation. Attendance at the Forum was over 200 people. The Forum was further publicised by a special issue of *Victoria's Resources*, Volume 13(2), "The Alpine Environment".
- 1972 **Coastal Resources Forum**
18 March - Seminar held at Burnley Horticultural College, including discussion of some papers published in *Victoria's Resources*, Volume 13(3), 1971, "Coastal Resources".
24/25 March - Field excursion to coastal areas near Geelong.
- 1973 **Wetlands Forum**
- 1974 **Roadsides and Conservation Forum**
Keynote Speaker: Professor George Seddon, University of Melbourne.
The most important outcome of this forum was the establishment of the Roadsides Conservation Committee.
- 1975 **The Grampians State Forest: Multiple Use Management of Public Lands** - Stawell and Melbourne (Spring)
Highlight of the Field Day was an aerial fire-bombing demonstration using Phoschek, a chemical fire retardant.
- 1976 **Management Problems of Streams and Stream Frontages**
Followed by March 1977 issue of *Victoria's Resources*, Vol.19(1) on the same theme.
- 1978 **Tree Planting in Agriculture** - Melbourne (Burnley Horticultural College) and Ballarat/Lismore. Field trip at private land-holders properties. The March issue of *Victoria's Resources*, Vol. 20(1),

explored the same theme.

- 1981 **Forum on Feral Animals** - Bairnsdale (4/5 April)
Attended by over 100 people. Focus was on the practical problems caused by feral animals.
- 1981 **Encounter on Salinity** - Bendigo (15/16 August)
Field day to visit dryland farming and irrigated land sites affected by salinity.
- 1982 **Trees for People** - Wycheproof (3/4 April)
- 1983 **Minerals and Mining Forum** - City of Springvale Civic Hall (30 April/ 1 May). Included papers on "The Ecology of Restoration" and the "After Use of Mineral Extraction Sites".
- 1984 **Fires, Farms and Forests** - Warrnambool (28/29 April). Theme: The development of Victoria-wide strategies for managing fire. A special feature of this forum was an exhibition of wildlife painting by Robert Ullman.
- 1986 **Salinity Update** - Kerang (31 May/1 June)
Conducted in conjunction with the Salinity Task Force through the Ministry of Planning and Environment.
- 1987 **Profitable Farms - Productive Land - The Future** - Ballarat (Old Ballarat Village Conference Centre) (19/20 March)
Joint Forum with Soil Conservation Association of Victoria.
- 1988 **New Gold for North East** - Ovens, near Myrtleford (7/8 April)
Examples of changing land use, and river management of the Ovens and King Rivers were examined during the field day.

Isaac Radio Broadcasts - 1955

No. TITLE

- 1 Purpose and membership of the Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria
- 2 Description of the Conservation League's Nursery
- 3 How trees can be obtained from the Conservation League's nursery
- 4 Summer work in the new plantation
- 5 Preparation of the ground for a farm tree plantation
- 6 Collecting tree seed
- 7 Planning farm tree planting
- 8 Free distribution of trees to Soldier Settlers
- 9 Selecting trees to suit various districts
- 10 Advantages of tube grown trees for farm planting
- 11 Autumn tree planting on farms
- 12 Municipal street tree planting
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- 14 Women's part in State-wide tree planting campaign
- 15 School Arbor Days
- 16 Young Farmers' Clubs - Senior Section
- 17 Use of Paperbarks (Melaleucas) in farm and street tree planting
- 18 The League's Field Work
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- 20 Planting deciduous trees - Open Root
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- 22 The balance between roots and leaves
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- 31 Shepparton - A well-planted provincial city
- 32 A member organisation - The Graziers' Association of Victoria

- 33 Raising trees from seed on the farm
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- 37 A member organisation - The Australian Primary Producers' Union
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- 48 The place of Municipalities in the Conservation League
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DIRECTORS 1944-1990



Cyril Isaac
1944-1955
1959-1962



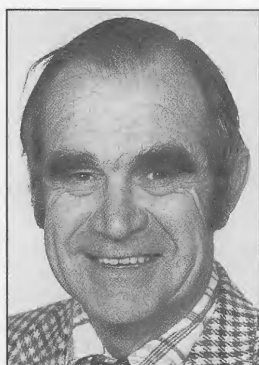
George Thompson
1962-1972



Sibley Elliot
1972-1975



Lance Edgar
1975-1979



Geoff Douglas
1979-1985



Les Schultz
1985-

SYNOPSIS:-

"The fundamental purpose of the Natural Resources Conservation League is to foster the conservation of natural resources with emphasis on public education and practical support for tree planting activities."

[from "Conservation Philosophies", Victoria's Resources, 18(2), June 1976, p. 12]

The Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria was initially established as the Save the Forests Campaign in 1944 before being incorporated under its present title late in 1951.

This *Historial Portrait* of the League traces its story from first plan to "Build a Forest Conscience" in 1944, to 1990, when the League's Nursery is responsible for the distribution of about a million young trees each year.

The story is organised into two major parts. **Part I**, "Historical Roots", examines the reasons for starting the Save the Forests Campaign, and offers a brief biographical sketch of Cyril Isaac, the prime mover behind the original Campaign.

Part II, "Traditions", looks at the League's continuing traditions: The Nursery, Education and Conservation. The League's distinctive identity and strength come from the mutual support of its three traditions.

For those who are interested in exactly when events occurred, a full Chronology is provided, separate from the text.

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