

Obituary

Norman Hall

10 January 1906 – 10 June 2005

Norman was born to schoolteacher parents, migrants from England, William and Martha Hall, at Pahiatua, near Palmerston North, New Zealand. The family subsequently lived on a tiny island in the Kerikeri Inlet, Bay of Islands, the only access to which was by a small dingy. He was among the first class of students to gain a BForSci from the Auckland University College of the University of New Zealand, and commenced his professional career in forestry in 1930 with NZ Perpetual Forests (later NZ Forest Products) before transferring to the Woods and Forests Department, South Australia, in 1937.

During World War II he served (April 1940–September 1945) as lieutenant and captain in the 2/1 Australian Forestry Company, Royal Australian Engineers, near Lockerbie in Scotland, and later RAE, New Guinea Forests, and (1945–1947) as a technical officer on the staff of the British Element of the Allied Control Commission at Graz, Austria.

He returned to South Australia in 1947 as Superintending Forester to establish the Working Plans Field Section with the principal task of assessing the suitability of unplanted departmental land for plantations. He joined the Forestry and Timber Bureau in Sydney in 1948 before that office was transferred to Canberra in July 1952. Norman's initial work with the Bureau was on forest resources and particularly plans for a national forest survey, a vision which came to fruition many decades later through the National Forest Inventory. At the time of his inventory work he became an associate member of the Australian Institute of Cartography.

In the early 1950s there was new international interest in the possible cultivation of eucalypts in countries other than Australia, and there was a rising demand for information about them. Unfortunately, useful information was scattered, incomplete and outdated. In response, Norman took up a pivotal role, among colleagues, in the preparation of a diverse range of publications on Australian trees, a task that continued over the following four decades. *Forest Trees of Australia*, first published in 1957, was the culmination of the first few years of this effort. It combined botanical and ecological descriptions with a comprehensive set of new photographs for each species treated. Many of the photos of foliage, buds and fruit were taken in hotel rooms at night, while the material would be fresh and so that as much field work as possible could be squeezed into the daylight hours.

In 1958 Norman was appointed a Senior Lecturer (engineering and utilisation) at the Australian Forestry School, a role he retained until 1967 when the Australian National University assumed full responsibility for such education. He is remembered by former students as described by Ian Bevege: 'Norman taught many foresters the basics of forest engineering and utilisation. He also had a keen interest in many other areas of forestry, including forest botany, as is witnessed by his preparation, with Doug Johnston and Charley Hamilton, of *Forest Trees of Australia* (1957). Norman will be remembered fondly by many foresters for the fatherly interest he took in their welfare as students, an interest that he demonstrated in many practical ways.'

Soon after leaving lecturing in 1967 to return to the Forestry and Timber Bureau, further new books appeared — *Growing Trees on Australian Farms* in 1968, an expanded edition of *Forest Trees of Australia* in 1970 and *The Use of Trees and Shrubs in the Dry Country of Australia* in 1972. Although 'retiring' in 1972, the ink on these manuscripts was barely dry before he began writing *Forest Tree Leaflets*: descriptions of eucalypt species not then included in *Forest Trees of Australia* but which were incorporated in later editions. In all, with Ian Brooker and other collaborators, some 220 of these were produced. He also undertook a similar series covering more than 100 acacias, most of which still await publication, and casuarinas.

He published on botanical and forestry subjects in the *Australian Journal of Botany*, *Unasylva* and *Australian Forestry*. For the last, he prepared a cumulative index covering the first 20 volumes of the journal to 1957, and managed the journal archives for many years.

Another important series of publications, *Botanists of the Eucalypts* (1978, Supplements in 1979, 1989, 1992), and *Botanists of Australian Acacias* (1984, Supplement in 1993), provide a comprehensive collection of biographies of Australian botanists and collectors. His contribution to forest botany is commemorated in the name of *Eucalyptus hallii*, Goodwood gum, which occurs between Bundaberg and Maryborough in Queensland.

His contribution to Australian forestry and the Institute of Foresters of Australia (including much of the organisation of the Institute's first conference, in Canberra) was recognised in the award of the N.W. Jolly Medal in 1977.

His later writing was undertaken in Sydney, where he combined it with other voluntary work in the Herbarium of the Royal Botanic Garden.

Norman moved in 1972 from Canberra to Anglican retirement villages, Hopetoun Village and (later) Nuffield Village, Castle Hill, where his contribution to village life is commemorated by Norman Hall Drive. He died peacefully at the latter; his wife Kate Cordett Hoyte, a New Zealander, had died shortly after their marriage in March 1948.

Few will match his legacy to Australian forestry.

Alan Brown
Canberra

