

A corporate citizen's view



Above: A contrast of juvenile and mature *Eucalyptus nitens* at the Surrey Hills plantation. MARK SCOTT/INRA
Left: AFH employees take a break at 18 Mile Road, Highclere



The hinterlands of Burnie in north-west Tasmania, richly forested with eucalypts and other hardwood species, were identified early in the twentieth century as being a suitable source of wood for manufacturing pulp and paper.

The area was first discovered by Henry Hellyer and subsequently named Surrey Hills. Hellyer was a surveyor during the 1820s with the Van Diemen's Land Company (VDL Co.), an English-based agricultural company. His initial expeditions were aimed at finding suitable grazing land for sheep. Hellyer climbed St Valentines Peak, a significant geographical feature some 30 km south of Burnie, and discovered about 65,000 ha of heavily wooded areas interspersed with grassy plains. He reported his find to his supervisors and stock grazing commenced.

The winters at Surrey Hills proved to be very harsh, with heavy frosts and snow. After about 10 years of consistently high livestock mortality and attacks on shepherds by Aborigines, the venture failed. For the next 80 years the property was generally under-utilised. Mining and hunting were undertaken, with sawmilling the main activity (to support the booming goldrush in Victoria). Evidence of those activities can still be found in the area today.

Early last century research was undertaken to ensure that making paper from eucalypts was commercially viable. Gerald Mussen, a New Zealand-born freelance journalist, was also an entrepreneur and adviser to a group of industrial brokers. In 1908, Mussen met Mr A. McGaw, manager of the VDL Co., and visited Surrey Hills. He was surprised and pleased with what he saw, describing it as "a wonderful place, very heavily timbered". He fervently believed that Burnie was most suited to a pulp and paper industry due to ample forest

resources, a deepwater port, a town populated with many potential employees and access to cheap electric power. Accordingly, Mussen purchased 50,000 ha of Surrey Hills from the VDL Co.

Many years passed during which Mussen and Walter Massy-Greene, a local and federal politician, sought financial resources for the formation of a pulp and paper company. Associated Pulp and Paper Mills (APPM) was formed in 1936, Surrey Hills was purchased from Mussen and the construction of a mill began. In 1938 APPM produced the first paper made from Tasmanian eucalypts. The vision of Mussen and indeed of Henry Hellyer and those who aided them launched the forest industry in north-west Tasmania.

Forest management was placed in the hands of a separate company, Forest Supplies Pty Ltd, and a professional forester was hired in 1945 to assist in planning and developing the wood supply for the Burnie mill and the devising of a forest policy. The products taken from the forest included pulpwood and boiler