Book Reviews
Earth and Industry Stories from Gippsland

Editors Erik Eklund and Julie Fenley,
Monash University Publishing, Clayton, Australia 2015
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Earth and Industry Stories from Gippsland examines the symbiotic relationship between an existing environment and how people live in and develop this environment to meet their needs. Each story is an engaging bite size fragment of Gippsland history that can be read and understood independently of its companions or according to the broader context of the environmental history of Gippsland. Editors Erik Eklund and Julie Fenley have organised the collection according to three key themes;

- the way that we learn about and represent human-environment interactions;
- the activities of states or international organisations, and the participation of citizens or interest groups in political and legal struggle; and
- production and technology (Eklund & Fenley eds, 2015, p. xxxi).

These themes collectively examine Gippsland as a case study of environmental history where that history is concerned with ‘past biological and physical systems, and the history of human interactions with these environments’ (Eklund & Fenley eds, 2015, p. xviii).

As a stranger to the history of Gippsland I found this book a fascinating read that draws a picture of the development of the Gippsland region from the perspective of indigenous and new residents, developers, businesses, politicians and visitors. Each of these perspectives is described both in terms of how the environment has been affected by people’s actions and how this environment has in turn affected and modified human activity. The two way relationship between humankind and the environment is at the heart of the premise of this book; that humankind is not separate from nature and the relationship between the two is a dynamic agent inextricably linked to the story of this or indeed any place.

Fields of endeavour addressed in Earth and Industry include forestry, pastoralism, dairy farming, small farm holdings, soldier settlement farming, commercial and recreational fishing, environmental tourism and leisure tourism. Unfortunately power generation and associated industries are not well represented in the collection. This deficiency in content is explained by the editors as a reflection of a gap in available research in this field and they suggest that the scope of power related industries requires the attention of a separate dedicated publication. That the hole in what appears to be an otherwise comprehensive account of industrial development in Gippsland is a product of a gap in scholarly understanding does not lessen my disappointment at the omission. Further, the prominent smoke stacks strikingly illustrated on the front cover encourage the expectation that power generating industries will be substantially addressed in the stories within.
Not withstanding my unsatisfied curiosity about the development of the power generating industry in Gippsland, I thoroughly enjoyed each installment of this story collection which was necessarily read piecemeal across several months. Of particular personal interest were the accounts of the history of bushwalking by Julie Fenley and Kathy Lothian, elements of the impact of and conflict within the fishing industry outlined by David Harris, the machinations of local versus organised ‘outside’ forest activism recounted by Deb Foskey and the impact of the evolution of motor tourism on Gippsland by Sarah Mirams.

In addition Jane Lennon describes how the history of Gippsland can be read through evidence in the landscape and Stephen Legg and Ruth Ford examine the subjects of forest conservation and settler women in Gippsland through evidence embedded in newspapers. Cheryl Glowrey, Ruth E Lawrence, Kerry Nixon and Jillian Durance discuss elements of the mechanics of Gippsland settlement, specifically the strategic role of Port Albert, the role of indigenous culture in establishing settlement centres, the conditions of small farm settlements and the repercussions of soldier settlements.

Some other industries that evolved from and contributed to the landscape of Gippsland are addressed by Charles Fahey, Julie Constable, Helen Martin and Deirdre Slattery. Fahey discusses the development and challenges of the dairy industry, Constable and Martin the paper and forest industries and Slattery the evolution of rural land use in Gippsland.

Meredith Fletcher encapsulates the idea of the interconnectedness between human activity and the environment in her exploration of the nature writings of Jean Galbraith. Fletcher looks at how the La Trobe Valley in Gippsland ‘shaped Jean Galbraith’s writing and how in turn, she placed her writing at the disposal of the valley as she watched it being transformed into an industrial region.’ (Eklund & Fenley eds, 2015, p. 180)

Eklund and Fenley conclude and contend that the extent of the reciprocity between environment and industry in Gippsland will result in dormant land use traditions and new ways of thinking inspiring the development of new industries to address present and future environmental challenges (Eklund & Fenley eds, 2015, pps 317-318).

I highly recommend _Earth and Industry Stories from Gippsland_ as both an engaging historical mosaic of the Gippsland region and an exploration of the idea of humankind and the environment as mutually influential agents of development.

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**Swallowed by the Sea**

Author: Graeme Henderson
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_Swallowed by the Sea_ is Graeme Henderson’s latest publication on Australia’s historic shipwrecks. This volume is a snapshot of Australian maritime disasters, and features fifteen shipwreck events extensively illustrated with high quality imagery. Most chapters feature individual shipwrecks that have subsequently been found and archaeologically investigated. Others are stories of sites that have yet to be located and two chapters are more thematic in scope, i.e. ‘Ladies on the shore’ (Ch. 8, p.108) and ‘The bombing of Darwin (Ch. 13 p.179).

With its emphasis on visual qualities and evocative stories, _Swallowed by the Sea_ is clearly designed to make shipwreck heritage more accessible to the general public. The book does not set out to be an academic reference work or a treatise on the development of shipwreck archaeology theory and practice in Australia. Instead it is a collection of notable shipwrecks and the challenges and adventure associated with their discovery and documentation. This structure is in keeping with a publication that is targeted at, and should appeal to, a general audience.
To some extent *Swallowed by the Sea* is within a similar genre to publications such as *Ships and Shipwrecks of the Americas: a history based on underwater archaeology* (Bass, ed., Thames & Hudson, London, 1988). Bass’s approach, however, was to use shipwreck archaeology to reveal information about technology and life on board that was not otherwise available from historic records. This created a connecting theme across the breadth of the book. He also used a variety of key scholars to write the individual chapters. This gave ‘gravitas’ to his book but perhaps also has made it less accessible to a general audience than *Swallowed by the Sea*.

*Swallowed by the Sea* references the author’s early involvement in shipwreck research with his discovery of the *Vergulde Draeck* at the age of 16. While that shipwreck does not feature in this book, a variety of subsequent projects in which the author himself played an active role, (either as a team member or team leader), do appear. These include his involvement with the *Tryal* (Ch.1, p.1), the *Batavia* (Ch.2, p. 17), the *Sirius* (Ch. 4, p. 48), the HMS *Pandora* (Ch5, p. 67) and the asylum boat *Siev* (Ch., 14, P. 191). In this vein, the publication is partly a personal biography of the author’s own career and his considerable contribution to the development of maritime archaeology in Australia and internationally. Other chapters provide a focus on projects with which the Western Australian Maritime Museum has been involved (HMAS *Sydney II*, Ch. 12, p. 162) or National Maritime Museum projects (HMS *Porpoise* and the *Cato*, Ch. 6, p. 81 and HM Colonial Schooner *Mermaid*, Ch. 7, p. 93).

The inclusion of the author’s current search for the *Fortuyn* seems somewhat at odds with the remainder of the book. The *Fortuyn* is a continuing project which has not yet succeeded in locating the shipwreck. In the absence of a known site, the discussion consists of an extended analysis of historic records and a prediction about where the wreck may be. While this serves to illustrate the research process its inclusion carries a certain risk. If the site is found in the favoured location the hypothesis will be proved correct but the book will be immediately dated. If the shipwreck is not found, or is found in another location, the hypothesis will be disproved and the book will, again, be dated.

A criticism of the book could be that it is simply ‘stories of Australia’s shipwrecks’. It may have been preferable for the chapters to have had a common thread or threads. For example, the book starts strongly on a theme of mapping Australia and perhaps this could have been extended. Instead that theme dissipates at Chapter four with the loss of the *Sirius*. The mapping theme re-emerges with the stories of the *Porpoise*, *Cato* and *Mermaid* in Chapters 6 and 7, and subsequently there is no apparent connecting theme but more a collection of interesting, but essentially unrelated stories.

That issue aside, this book is a welcome addition to the growing body of published works about Australia’s maritime past. The stories are well told, the illustrations are of high quality and the layout, print quality and general presentation are of a very high standard. It will be valued by shipwreck enthusiasts and followers of Australian history.

Other books by Graeme Henderson include:

*The Wreck of the Elizabeth*, (1973, Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, Sydney)


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