



Theodore Norman Stoate (1895-1979), forester, was born on 13 January 1895 at Stepney, Adelaide, son of Alfred Thorne Stoate, draper, and his wife Bessie, née Haskins. 'Bill', as he was nicknamed, attended the Collegiate School of St Peter and studied forestry at the University of Adelaide (B.Sc., 1918; M.Sc., 1934; D.Sc., 1953). On 20 December 1915 he suspended his course and enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force. In March 1917 he was commissioned and posted to the 35th Battalion on the Western Front. He was gassed at Messines, Belgium, in June and invalided home; at this time his hair turned prematurely white. Lieutenant Stoate's A.I.F. appointment terminated in Adelaide on 14 January 1918.

After graduating, Stoate joined the Forestry Commission of New South Wales in 1919. Three years later he was seconded to the Forests Department, Western Australia, for six months. He was to stay there for thirty-one years. In 1923 he was appointed assistant working plans officer **and instructor at the apprentice school at Ludlow**; by 1927 he was assistant-conservator to S. L. Kessell. Awarded a (Sir) Russell Grimwade scholarship that year, he sailed for England and entered the University of Oxford (Dip.For. 1931).

Back in Western Australia, Stoate investigated suspected nutrient deficiencies in *Pinus radiata* and *Pinus pinaster* plantations. When he observed trees near a wire fence thriving more than others, he deduced that they did so because zinc from the fence had leached into the soil. He subsequently found that 'irregular and abnormal' growth was due to a lack of superphosphate and minor elements. In 1939-40 he was seconded to the Woods and Forests Department, South Australia. Returning to Perth, he served as deputy-conservator (1941-45) and Conservator (1946-53).

A solitary, academic widower, Stoate disliked the hurly-burly of political manoeuvring and detested what he called 'pannikin bosses'. He was happiest in the bush. Even there he always wore a neat suit and polished boots. Once, after a day's work, he helped to fight a karri wildfire. Removing his jacket and braces, and using his tie as a belt, he borrowed a shovel and toiled all night beside a bulldozer to build a fire-line. He returned to his office early in the morning. The bulldozer driver later asked: 'who was that old bugger swamping for me last night—he wasn't bad!'

The royal commission into forestry and timber matters reported in 1952 that 'the forest policy of the State is considered to be sound in principle, and soundly administered'. Nevertheless, after pressure from some timber merchants and a change of government, the new Labor minister and former forests department draftsman H. E. Graham did not renew Stoate's appointment in 1953.

Stoate became an international forestry consultant. Between 1963 and 1971 he held a series of research positions at the college of forestry, University of Washington, Seattle, United States of America. He encouraged young Australian foresters to undertake postgraduate study at the university, helped many with their research, and often treated them to a hearty steak and a pint. In Perth and at Seattle he lived in a sparse hotel room. At the age of 70 he still bounded joyfully up four flights of stairs to his office. On 7 July 1924 at St Mary's Church of England, Busselton, he had married Marion Frances Josephine Brockman; they had two sons before she died in 1930. Survived by one son, he died on 12 April 1979 at Busselton, Western Australia, and was buried in Karrakatta cemetery, Perth. *Eucalyptus stoatei* was named after him.

### Select Bibliography

- A. Rule, *Forests of Australia* (Syd, 1967)
- *50 Years of Forestry in Western Australia* (Perth, 1969)
- L. T. Carron, *A History of Forestry in Australia* (Canb, 1985)
- J. Mills, *The Timber People* (Perth, 1986)