

Talbot, Len

From website coverage of the book titled “Nannup. A Place to Stop and Visit”. by Len Talbot (2003), 204 pp

This book covers every aspect of the history of the Lower Blackwood district of W.A. prior to the 1980s. It tells of the explorers of the area between the 1820s and 1850s, of the struggles of the pastoralists-squatters who followed them, in protecting their herds from marauding Aborigines, dingoes and poison plants, of police hunts for absconding convicts and Aboriginal lawbreakers, and with the introduction of convict labour into the district, the establishment of a Police station and post office in the 1870s that lead to the development of the nucleus of the township that was to become Nannup.

The author takes the reader into the rough and dangerous life of mill workers, sleeper cutters and teamsters, and their boisterous life style when visiting the pub or sampling the sly groggers wares. He tells of the rip roaring days of the 1920s when hundreds of mill workers and sleeper cutters employed in the surrounding forests congregated in the town for the annual race meeting, log-chopping carnivals, football and cricket matches. He portrays a realistic picture of the impact, of the wars and the depression on this small close knit community, as well as of their struggles with bureaucracy in the establishment of the districts fifteen schools. In fact every aspect of life - churches, Roads Board, Farmers and Graziers Association, medical and hospital , entertainment - all are dealt with. In addition the reader will be delighted with the many very humorous anecdotes scattered throughout this narrative.

Len Talbot, great grandson of James Kearney, an Irish Fenian convict and one of the earliest settlers on the Lower Blackwood, was born in Perth Western Australia in 1926. He was educated at the Nannup and Carlotta State Schools and the Nannup Convent, but left school at the age of fifteen to work at the local timber mill until 1946. He spent the next seven years working at a variety of some 30 jobs as he travelled throughout Australia before returning to work at the Nannup mill in 1953. In 1954 he joined the Forests Department and for the remainder of his working life followed a career with that department, except for a break of six years spent with the Commonwealth Forestry and Timber Bureau as project supervisor on Aboriginal Reserves in Arnhemland and on the Tiwi Islands. He has had several articles and stories on forest history published in Forestry publications and in 1983 won the Western Australian Historical Society's Lee-Steere Essay Award for an essay on the history of the sandalwood industry.

From “Leaves from the forest. Stories from the lives of West Australian foresters” Roger Underwood, Editor (1987)

Len Talbot's father worked part time for the Forests Department . Before moving to the eastern states in 1947, Len worked as a chainman for the Forests Department in various places, including Dwellingup and Mundaring. In 1954 he re-joined the Forests Department, worked in the gang at Yornup, then in an assessment team at Clear Hills, north of Denmark. He then transferred to Margaret River, where he worked for most of the next 8 years. During this time he also worked in Ludlow, Willow Springs, Jarrahwood, Busselton and Boranup. In 1955-56 he was in Walpole and Shannon River. In 1962 he was in Pemberton, when he resigned from the Forests Department, to work for the Commonwealth in the Northern Territory. He re-joined the Forests Department as a forest ranger in 1969.