

Cambridge to Conservation

John Turner and ecology at the University of Melbourne

Dr Linden Gillbank

The study of ecology developed slowly and sporadically in Australia, with only a little ecological research being undertaken in university botany departments before World War Two.

Ecology was invigorated at the University of Melbourne by an enthusiastic and energetic plant physiologist, Dr John Stewart Turner. Appointed the University's second professor of botany and plant physiology in 1938, Turner brought ecological interests and expertise that he had developed at Cambridge. After the War, when there were few conservation-oriented groups and no ecological society in Australia, and when little of Victoria's diverse vegetation had been documented, he initiated, facilitated and supervised ecological research in Victoria.

Turner understood that ecology and conservation were intimately linked, the latter requiring an adequate understanding of the former. He contributed to conservation campaigns and the establishment and efforts of conservation groups. He was midwife to Victoria's first conservation survey, and supported his colleagues' participation in conservation organisations.

Linden Gillbank will examine Turner's development of plant ecology at the University of Melbourne and the importance of his Cambridge experience.

Dr Gillbank is an historian of Australian botany, currently preparing a history of the Botany School.

An exhibition *Sowing a Seed: Art Inspired by the Herbarium* is showing at the Leigh Scott Gallery. The Collections Manager at the Herbarium, Nicole Middleton, will be happy to answer questions about the exhibition after the seminar.



John Stewart Turner, Bogong High Plains, January 1949

1:00pm
Thursday
9 October 2008

Leigh Scott Room
First floor, Baillieu Library
The University of Melbourne

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