

Through Trackless Bush

Julia Millen

Forest policy (which no longer seems to exist in New Zealand), and its development, was the reason for initiating a survey of the country's indigenous forest resources, a task that ended up being of much greater magnitude than imagined at the outset.

The publication of the book "Through Trackless Bush" marks the first time there has been an account of the National Forest Survey which produced the only timber volume and forest type maps for much of New Zealand's indigenous forest estate, and also produced a large volume of ecological information. The instigator of the book project, Peter Olsen, had in mind something a little simpler than the final publication. His intention was to assemble a collection of reminiscences from various people who had worked on the National Forest Survey, and which would make for interesting and informative reading.

Considering it is over forty years since the survey was completed the detail and accuracy of the contributors is gratifying. This also lends weight to the theory that the roughest trips into the bush are the ones you remember best!

The many and varied accounts of those people who worked at the sharp end of the job make up bulk of the story, and I am certain if Peter had lived to see the final publication he would have been delighted with the result.

A thoughtful "Foreword" by A P Thomson, who set the NFS project up with little in the way of manpower or other resources, and who provided the drive to get the job done, and the excellent rationale by the author Julia Millen of the need for the survey and its subsequent contribution to New Zealand forest policy, help give the book its structure and direction.

The presentation of the book is completely in character with the tale it tells. An appropriate commencement is the photograph on the cover of Peter Olsen peering from behind a tangle of supplejack, the eternal curse of those packing loads through the bush.

It is clearly printed on good quality paper and the text is well supported with both coloured and black and white photographs. Reminiscences are compiled for the most part so that they relate to specific survey units or areas. This makes good sense as each unit had its own character, varying from the magnificent forests growing on the pleasant pumice country of Whirinaki, to the scruffier forests on the broken and very rugged country of the Paparoas

There are many examples of typical New Zealand "outback" humour in these tales which makes the book an easy and entertaining read. For me the most illuminating section is that dealing with the Haast surveys. For many years I had been advised by a notable contributor to the book, just how tough it was working in the Haast. However this doesn't stack up so well against Trevor Gebbie's claim that his period at Haast, where it seldom rained, was "...one of the best times of my life". I guess the lesson here is to regard all such tall tales with a measure of cynicism.

In the final section of the book (apart from the postscript), a quote from the annual report of the NZ Forest Service records the results from the survey and the foundation they provided for "...national timber supply policy and further ecological and silvicultural research".

Julia Millen has produced a book of high quality working in trying circumstances. It is in essence a tribute to those who spent long periods working in the bush where sunlight is absent and rain not infrequent, and it is also a valuable addition to the history of the forestry sector in New Zealand.

The supporting role provided by drafting staff compiling forest type maps and assembling and maintaining a complex record system is acknowledged, along with the leadership of Priestly Thomson and his support team of Jack Holloway, Stan Masters and Peter McKelvey.

The book can be acquired from PF Olsen and Co, PO Box 1127, Rotorua at a cost of \$30.
GM O'Neill

Farm Forestry - the first 50 years

Dudley Franklin

Joll Hosking is to be congratulated on producing such a fine history of the first 50 years of organised farm forestry in New Zealand. His wide knowledge of the history and people concerned with the Farm Forestry Association, together with a willingness to call on specialist help, and a thorough researching of relevant publications, has resulted in an attractively presented book of which members can be justifiably proud.

All of us can benefit from a knowledge of the history of the organisations we belong to, as it allows us to put in perspective the progress that has been made, and in some cases the reasons for inertia. Anyone reading this book will have a thorough grasp of how the Association started, and how it has got to where it is today. Joll starts off with a good account of how Neil Barr initiated the farm forestry movement, and the early support received from the Forest Service. It was a difficult birth, as timber markets were dominated by native timbers, prices were kept artificially low by price control, timber preservation was in its infancy, and there was practically no market for farm-grown timber.

The nine chapters which form the core of the book will be the main reason non-Association members will want to buy this book. They provide a wealth of references to articles on shade and shelter, radiata woodlots, special purpose species, soil conservation issues, land use and landscape issues, indigenous forestry, timber preservation on the farm, and the problems of pests and diseases.

The book costs \$45, and is available from Association branch secretaries as well as from Mike Smith, 120 Pahiatua Track, R D 1, Palmerston North.