

# Kiwis to the fore at Australian Forestry School Reunion 2000

Colin O'Loughlin

Good fellowship and camaraderie among foresters was never stronger than when past graduates of the Australian Forestry School gathered together in Canberra in late April to attend the Australian Forestry School Reunion 2000. The occasion was significant for New Zealand because, over the years 1949-1965, 43 New Zealanders graduated from the school. Many well known and successful New Zealand foresters and forest researchers including John Groome, Tony Grayburn, Colin Bassett, Harry Bunn, Eric Ensor, Jim Spiers, Peter Olsen, Andy Kirkland, Geoff Sweet, Ash Cunningham, Keith Chandler, Bruce Willis, Colin O'Loughlin, Peter Allan and John Wardle, gained their forestry training at the school.

The Australian Forestry School began its life at the Adelaide University in 1926 and transferred to a new School facility in Yarralumla, Canberra in 1927. After 40 years of existence during which time 584 students received forestry training, the AFS was incorporated into the Canberra Australian National University in 1965.

At the reunion over 300 graduates and wives and partners, including 13 New Zealand graduates, visited the old Forestry School in Yarralumla, attended individual class reunions, imbibed fine Australian beer and wine at a reception at the Old Parliament Building, wined, dined and danced at a reunion ball and travelled to the Brindabella Ranges near Canberra to view the natural and planted forests of the area and visit old AFS experimental plots and plantings. The Australian organisers made a superb effort to ensure that the reunion was varied, interesting and entertaining.

The reunion rekindled memories of "Doc" Max Jacobs delivering marvellous lectures on forest management and many other forestry and non forestry topics, the frustration of trying to identify at least 50

eucalypt species from tattered samples of leaves, twigs and capsules in the taxonomy lab exam, long arduous field trips to Queensland and South Australia, the Wellington Pub and, not least, the Canberra hospital nurses balls and social evenings. However, the highlight for most New Zealand attendees was the chance to re-establish contact with old Australian colleagues who had not been seen or heard about for several decades.

At the AFS reunion ball, Professor Peter Kanowski (Professor and head of the ANU Department of Forestry) and his father Peter Kanowski who was a graduate of the AFS in the 1950s, jointly spoke about the differences in forestry training and forestry approaches in the time of the AFS and the present day.

The Professor emphasised the impact of computer technologies on forestry training and, with a certain amount of tongue in cheek, explained how the computer had replaced the axe as an essential training tool.

Tertiary training in forestry was not the only notable change brought to the attention of New Zealand attendees.

The city of Canberra at the time when most of the New Zealanders attended AFS, had a population of less than 60,000 people. Yarralumla was regarded as an outer suburb of the city.

Today, the city boasts a population of over 300,000. Yarralumla is now an inner city suburb and Lake Burley Griffin occupies a large area of central Canberra where once a golf course and open fields provided weekend recreational opportunities for AFS forestry students.

No wonder some of the New Zealanders had problems locating reunion venues.

Overall, the reunion was a great success and there was much talk about the need to have another AFS reunion in perhaps 5 to 10 years time before many of those present at the 2000 event have passed on.

## Pleasure and nostalgia in response to book

Sir,

It was with great pleasure and no little nostalgia that I received and read the book "Through Trackless Bush".

My heartfelt congratulations to those who worked so hard to get this into print. This goes to Bob Lawn who first started collecting material and to Pete Olsen and his followers who finally got it into print. It was a labour of love and will be appreciated by all who took part in the survey.

The stories of those who toiled through the podocarp forests of both the North and South Islands will make those of us who were confined to the Southland beech forests realise how lucky we were to have such easy going. The descriptions of the forests and the conditions are excellent. To those who have no chance of venturing off the beaten tracks it will give some idea of what the

undisturbed New Zealand native forest is like, and of how rough physically is much of the land.

The book is well presented, well edited and a valuable addition to New Zealand literature. For my part I could detect two errors. The first on page 48, where the height of Lake Hauroko is misprinted and the height of The Hump ridge is given instead. The second is the diameter of the wire rope for the Wairaurahiri Bridge. This is given as half-inch diameter. This would never have pulled a loaded Dunedin cable car up the hill. The rope was one and three quarters of an inch diameter. There is a difference in weight up by a factor of 12 and much more in cantankerousness.

My sincere congratulations to all those who toiled to get this excellent book into print.

J.E. Henry