

Keeping New Zealand Green by Elizabeth Orr (2017)

Reviewed by Peter Berg

Elizabeth Orr is the daughter of Alex Robert Entrican (Pat), the longest-serving Director of the New Zealand Forest Service (initially the State Forest Service), who grew up in a household where trees, forests and wood processing were regular discussion items. Holidays included visits to forests and meetings with forestry people. She was still a young woman when her father passed away 52 years ago, and only four years after retiring as Director in 1961.

At that time Entrican was recognised as someone who had worked tirelessly and wrought profound changes to the developing forest industry in New Zealand, although it was also acknowledged that:



Alexander R. 'Pat' Entrican c. 1932

History with the advantage of a longer perspective will undoubtedly judge this turbulent and controversial character more objectively ... than those who speak or write of him as a contemporary. But foresters everywhere, and none more so than New Zealand's, will long remember a doughty fighter ... striving and stimulating others to drive for the ideal in forestry, come fire, flood or politics.

History has indeed written of and judged Entrican several times over the intervening five decades or so, but the collective opinion is the same. His is a name which stands with the leaders of change, one of the greatest contributors to a successful national forestry sector.

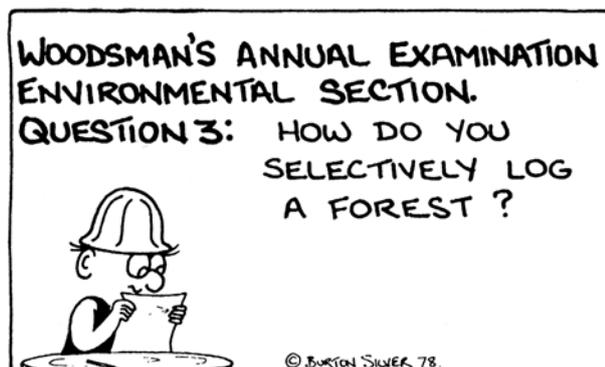
After his death Elizabeth supervised the collection of his large store of papers, memoranda, photographs,

etc, to be held in the Turnbull Library under embargo. Nearly 50 years on and after a successful career also characterised by tireless effort, striving to see her goals achieved and encouraging others (she played a significant part in the passing of the Equal Pay Act 1972 and was the first woman Chancellor of Victoria University in Wellington), she decided to set the New Zealand forestry record straight, at least on a couple of matters in which her father had played a leading role.

The first of these was the interest and involvement of the Forest Service in the pulp and paper industry that was developed around the huge Bay of Plenty forests created in the late 1920s and 1930s. The Murupara forestry scheme was a

very substantive contribution to New Zealand's post-war industrial development, and its timely achievement owed a great deal to Entrican's advocacy and focused negotiation. His willingness to engage widely and ensure strong state support until the project was running facilitated a positive outcome and may still have a place in a small country requiring international scale investment.

The second was the Forest Service's commitment to the perpetuation of New Zealand's native forests. Elizabeth is a strong believer in policies based on well-structured and performed research, and less on emotion, and feels that it is time to move on from the ardent protection at all costs views of the last few decades.



first you select a forest and then you log it.





Elizabeth Orr at the plaque at Scion about her father, Alexander R. 'Pat' Entrican

In preparation for writing *Keeping New Zealand Green*, Elizabeth not only looked to Entrican's records, she accessed the NZ Archives embargoed Treasury files relating to the government's relationship with Tasman Pulp and Paper Ltd, reviewed a number of other publications, and spoke to many people who had lengthy careers in the Forest Service or with other forestry sector participants.

As a consequence, she is able to provide a new dimension on aspects of decision-making and forestry policy not obvious and certainly not well known to those not immediately involved at the time. For example, few people are now aware that Tasman Pulp and Paper was the product of a close public-private sector partnership and just how important the government was in shaping the enterprise that emerged.

A big focus of *Keeping New Zealand Green* is accounting for the Forest Service's role in preserving our native forests. By talking to foresters involved at the front line Elizabeth is able to provide important insights into some of the decision-making and the events that drove those decisions. Her conclusion that good science provides the best basis for sound management policies for our indigenous forests is a tenet most of us could readily acknowledge, with examples such as the present harvest of windblown native forest from conservation land on the West Coast, the harvesting of silver beech in Western Southland, and the potential for management of tōtara reversion on private land in Northland showing the way.

At least part of Elizabeth's interest in restoring and managing native forest relates to her own experience with family land near Te Horo where she has countered the previous history of pests, weeds and livestock to create a thriving forest natural ecosystem. In that forest, and in her wider interests, she has not shied from the tough issues. In *Keeping New Zealand Green* she has similarly stepped up, promoting solutions to our diminishing ecosystem that are both logical and achievable, and advocating for action.

Keeping New Zealand Green is notable for being easy to read and often quite compelling as it traces some of

the intrigue, misunderstandings and outright mistakes which have characterised our forest history. The story flows nicely, while the text is not overly complicated by foresters' jargon or lots of facts and figures. A nice touch is several Burton Silver cartoons, while photographs have been well used to identify some of the important players, localities and issues of the day. It is also a useful reference, as each chapter has a clearly outlined theme and is self-contained, making the end of each a good place to pause although there is also plenty to draw the reader on.

Finally, if you are expecting this book to simply focus on Alex Entrican and his life and times you will be surprised. It certainly acknowledges the leadership he provided and instances his sometimes doughty and insistent approach, but many of his actions in other aspects of forestry (e.g. forestry training and forest research) are less well identified. Elizabeth has been quite willing to pick up the threads at the appropriate point, but has also been happy to look beyond Entrican's time for solutions and the next steps for a better forestry future. Not every forester will agree with her conclusions, but of one thing I am quite certain – all of us will share her view that the time to act is now.

Keeping New Zealand Green is available from the publisher, Steele Roberts Aotearoa Ltd, PO Box 9321, Wellington (www.steeleroberts.co.nz) or email these details to info@steeleroberts.co.nz. Cost \$45.00 (includes p&p).

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