



Forest Research has been delighted to see the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association grow to its current level, where it is able to make valuable contributions to the national forestry scene. *Forest Research* has been happy to contribute to that growth, especially through the technology transfer opportunities that the NZFFA has provided to scientists. The entrepreneurial skills of farm foresters have often led researchers into new areas, to our mutual benefit, and the Association's input into *Forest Research* symposia and workshops has been invaluable.

Some specific areas of mutual interest where *Forest Research* and the NZFFA have made significant advances through collaboration are:

- National Farm Forestry conferences
- Tikitere agroforestry trial
- AEM (Agroforestry Estate Model)
- Shelter
- Action groups: Cypress, Paulownia, and AMIGO
- Forest health
- Timber preservation
- Harvesting
- Eucalypts (Neil Barr was very strong in his support of research programmes).

But perhaps the largest NZFFA input to *Forest Research* programmes has been the use of farm foresters' land for research trials, which have provided the foundation for internationally acclaimed databases.

Forest Research congratulates the Farm Forestry Association on the occasion of their Jubilee. We wish them well in their endeavours, and hope that the future will bring collaboration as fruitful as we have seen in the past.

Contact us:

Forest Research	telephone – 07 343 5899
Sala Street	facsimile – 07 343 5379
Private Bag 3020	e-mail – info@forestresearch.co.nz
ROTORUA	web – www.forestresearch.co.nz

1. INTRODUCTION

Many societies, associations, and clubs devoted to tree planting have been formed in New Zealand, mostly specialising in a narrow sphere of interest such as conservation, camellias, or conifers. When Neil Barr, Hec Nicholls, Frank Bartlett, and their friends formed the Farm Forestry and Horticultural (Lower North) Association in 1950 its objects were much broader, “to gain a knowledge of trees and shrubs available for timber, shade, and shelter and to visit farms where tree planting has been carried out ...”. Thus an organisation was formed with a largely rural base, and with the commercial value of trees for various purposes added to the aesthetic value.

The Forest Service Director A.R. Entrican and Deputy Director Lindsay Poole encouraged Neil to travel first around the lower North Island and then the South Island to discuss with farmers the advantages of forming groups similar to Lower North. The North Island Branches formed the Combined Farm Forestry Association of New Zealand in 1957, with this name changed to the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association at the 1959 AGM in New Plymouth.

The first Conferences were attended by 50–60 delegates, but the events became very popular so that for many years now attendance numbers are usually over 300.

Neil and Rose Barr were strong family people and brought this family involvement into the Association. Conferences were attended mostly by couples, with wives and children often attending Branch field days. By visiting each other’s properties and getting to know the family circumstances, a unique blend of commercial, social, and hobby tree planting interests was catered for, giving strength to the whole organisation.

Drawing up a Constitution was put off for several years until finally a committee chaired by Wellington Conservator Ron Wells drew up the Rules of the Association in 1963, covering Incorporation of the National Association and all Branches. The date of Incorporation was 17 May 1963. There were no members of the National Association; everyone

joined a Branch and this automatically made them members of the parent body. The area of each Branch could be defined by the National Executive and, while Branches could have varying names, they must include the words “a branch of the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association (Inc.)”, which may be a surprise to most Branch committees. This leads to slight confusion in that although they are Branches of the National Association, each Branch is known individually as, for instance, the Waikato Farm Forestry Association.

The Rules were first published in *Farm Forestry* 5/4 November 1963, with minor alterations at the 1971 Whangarei AGM, published in *Farm Forestry* 13/1 March 1971. Updated Rules were set out with Conference notes at Invercargill in 1998.

Each Branch acts autonomously, electing its own committee, arranging its own programme, and setting its own subscription, so long as this is sufficient to cover the National Association levy which includes the quarterly journal. In 1998 tiered subscriptions were called for by the National Association based on the area a member had in trees. Three tiers (0–10 ha, 10–40 ha, and above 40 ha) had three different subscriptions, with the area declared on a voluntary basis.

The use of a levy on wood sold has been considered in lieu of a subscription, but as most members have been planting rather than harvesting, this is an option for the future.

The Rules called for a Council, made up of one member appointed by each Branch. Councillors elect the National Executive, and may have a proportional vote of one to each 50 members (or part thereof), if called for. After 1 year Niall Alexander gave notice of motion that at the following AGM he would move for the abolition of the Council. This was rescinded, and Council has continued until the present day but it has not been satisfactory.

For many years, the AGM would resolve itself into a Council meeting to elect officers, and then go back to a full meeting, which appeared to deny general discussion on voting for Executive. This was finally resolved by allowing

nominations to be called for and published months before the AGM so that Branches could have an input, and by having a separate Council meeting to elect the Executive before the AGM.

The system is still not satisfactory as very often a councillor is anyone who happens to be attending Conference, and some Branches have no delegates (although they may have a proxy). Councillors may not be informed enough and do not have a continuity to allow them to make considered decisions on what may be important matters.

The term of President was not defined at the beginning, but after 1975 was limited to 2 years. This has worked well, with North and South Islands taking on the role alternately. Some Presidents feel they are just gaining confidence when time is up!

Neil Barr, President for the first 6 years, set a style of informality, humour, and a strong distaste for administration. This was maintained right through until the mid 1990s, but growing membership put more pressure on the Executive, and greater expectations from some members caused a change with the appointment of an Executive Officer in 1994 on top of paid administration of membership, firstly by Federated Farmers and then by our own Administration Officer. The collection of subscriptions was also taken on by



Past-Presidents of the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association at Neil Barr's funeral gathering in Auckland, January 1996.

Back row, from left: John Mackay, Richard Davies-Colley, Joll Hosking, Jim Pottinger. *Front row:* Tom MacBride, John Mortimer, Mike Smith.

Head Office, whereas previously this had always been done by the Branch Secretary/Treasurer.

These changes followed the “McLagan Review”, a consultant’s report on recommended future directions for the Association. Bruce Treeby and Eoin Garden also prepared a business plan for the Executive beginning with a Mission Statement— “Adding to pleasure and profit with trees”.

With the hiring of a consultant, the preparation of a business plan, and the appointment of an Executive Officer, one could say the Association had arrived! This management system is under review at the time of printing (1999) as a lower membership has necessitated a return to a more thrifty approach.

An Extraordinary Council meeting was held on 23 November 1999 to resolve serious personal differences within the Executive after the resignation of the Executive Officer and the Administration Officer. Two members of the Executive resigned, a new Administration Officer was appointed, and the reduced Executive agreed to continue until elections were held at the Conference in April 2000. The appointment of an Executive Officer was also left in abeyance until the Conference.

The debate has waxed and waned throughout most of the Association’s life on whether the body should become more commercial, which means getting more involved in wood marketing. Many think that the Association should be concerned with providing practical information on tree growing for a variety of purposes, and that commercial decisions should be left to the individual. Certainly, with the present subscription levels it is difficult to maintain involvement in research on the many topics that interest members, let alone develop a commercial arm. The core membership at Branch level want information through the *Tree Grower*, but have not, in any substantive way, asked for commercial development.

Several Branches have established a type of co-operative to help with sales and gain a higher stumpage. There was a strong feeling in this direction in the early years as many farm wood sales were made without adequate advice, and

did not receive a good deal. Farm foresters are individuals, though, who tend to look for the best price for their wood as for their stock, and so often they were not loyal to these co-operatives. There is now a range of consultants and marketing companies, and so members can make an informed choice, with a good contract drawn up before selling logs.

Membership of the Association reached 2207 by 1963, 2800 by 1967, and dropped to 2400 in 1969 with a committee set up in 1971 to look at ways of increasing it. There were 3000 members by 1979, 3500 by 1982, 4000 by 1992, and a peak of 4700 in 1995. A sharp drop means that late in 1999 there are about 3500 members again. These figures seem to indicate a solid core of genuinely interested members who enjoy the Association and whose membership is stable, with a number of people joining perhaps at the time of planting, but not having a continued interest.

During the years of the Loan and Grant Schemes it was always a concern to Executive that many taking advantage of these schemes did not join the Association. Forest Service Extension Officers encouraged these people to join by giving them brochures, and subscriptions were made a qualifying expense. At one time in 1973, a complimentary copy of the *Farm Forestry* journal was given to each new grantee.

Similarly, in recent years many people investing in forestry through joint venture arrangements would have been welcome as members, but probably had little interest in trees—only in how well their investment was performing.

The Association was fortunate to become established when there was a great deal of assistance available. It is doubtful that Neil Barr or any other group could have formed the country-wide Branch structure without Forest Service help which was encouraged by the Government of the day. The administration of the Loan and Grant Schemes by the Forest Service Extension Service was responsible for wide dissemination of knowledge to all members, not just those planting under the schemes.

The widespread trials by FRI on members' properties, and the very many field days attended by FRI staff, have

been responsible for spreading up-to-date thinking on a whole range of species.

Catchment Boards providing subsidies for erosion control plantings, and working closely with the National Plant Materials Centre at Aokautere, were responsible for many farmers making a start on tree planting.

The work of the Crop Research Division of DSIR gave a boost to research on shelter, leading the National Shelter Working Party whose report was published as *Water and Soil Publication No.59* by the National Water and Soil Conservation Organisation under the Ministry of Works.

Virtually all this State assistance to farmers has gone. Combined with a steadily deteriorating income on most farms, there must be concern that the expertise available in the past will be forgotten, or not readily found by many farmers, leading to a decline in tree planting for other than commercial woodlots.

The Association received a great deal of help from the Forest Service, and we played a part in the Forestry Development Conferences of 1969, 1974, and 1981. These conferences were large and well run by the Forestry Council, involving all sections of the industry. Planting targets, export and processing trends, and research requirements for the next 5 years were set. There is now no Forestry Council, but the Forest Industries Council organised in 1997 includes members from both growing and processing, with the Association contributing \$7000 annually and taking part in environmental and research committees. This Council may grow in importance, but without State involvement its focus is likely to be dominated by large company interests and not include a national philosophy on the role of forestry in New Zealand, with adequate recognition of special-purpose species and high-value products in niche markets.

Perhaps a positive development, though not helping the country's balance of payments very much, has been the rise in numbers of lifestyle blocks, many owned by people keen on beautifying their properties by planting a range of ornamental and native trees. This group may well provide a source of new members for the Association.

Sponsorship has become increasingly important to Association income. Most Branches hosting the annual Conference have been able to meet many expenses from sponsors. From about \$16-00 in 1970, the annual Conference fee is now \$280-00 per person plus travel and accommodation, which can easily total \$2000 for a couple if much air travel is included. As sponsorship usually comes close to the time of a Conference, the host Branch cannot budget for it, but can end up with a substantial profit. The Executive underwrites the host Branch should there be a loss, and so takes any surplus for National funds, though a payment back to the Branch can be made, particularly if there is a worthwhile project of tree planting in the Branch area.

The awards of cash or advisory services, chainsaws, vacuum cleaners, and herbicides made each year are highly thought of and much appreciated. A sponsorship committee was appointed in 1998 to look into the possibility of raising more money for the Association.

The New Zealand Farm Forestry Foundation, now the Neil Barr Farm Forestry Foundation, is building up a capital fund independently from the Association with donations, grants, and bequests. It is hoped that interest from this fund will, in due course, pay a considerable portion of the research needs as determined by the Trustees.

The Association promoted itself by introducing ties, badges, logos (for the front gate), pullovers, and bumper stickers. Advertising, mainly in *Straight Furrow*, brought new members but was expensive. The annual display by John Mortimer and his team at Mystery Creek was a valuable promotion, both in getting the farm forestry idea more widespread and in gaining members.

Discussions took place with the Tree Crops Association at various times, as there was concern about overlap in the work of the two organisations. This was finally put to rest with a joint statement from the two associations in 1988 agreeing to go their own ways, but co-operating at branch level where appropriate.

In 1983 a committee of Past Presidents and Life Members, often referred to as the Golden Oldies, was set up and has met



Ket Bradshaw

at each Conference since. The idea was to use past experience to help the current Executive members in any way they wished. Some useful suggestions have been referred back to the Executive from this group, although it mainly enjoys the catching up of information on family and friends.

The Association can feel proud of its achievements since 1950. From a time when few trees were being planted, and the return from sales of timber was pitifully low, we are now in a situation where large numbers of farmers have planted trees, often extensive plantations, to offer an alternative land use that has been very profitable. Ket Bradshaw calculated in 1998 that our members owned or managed 200 000 ha of forest (this includes some large organisational plantings such as those of Roger Dickie for Forest Enterprises).

The techniques of establishing good shelter are there for anyone to see, as are methods of controlling soil erosion. Special-purpose species and indigenous trees have their own action groups under the Association umbrella. There will be someone in a Branch not far from you who can show you how to manage these trees or tell you where to get good advice.

The *Tree Grower* has continued to grow in importance to our members and contains excellent articles to satisfy all groups. It is the most vital part of the organisation, conveying research findings to members as well as keeping everyone informed on Executive thinking.

The Association, like the whole economy, may be going through a trough at present, but the enthusiasm of leading members, with careful management, will ensure its continued success into the next 50 years.