

OBITUARY

Gerald Hoyte Hocking

Gerald Hocking's career in forestry was many things, and a story of real achievement. He was known first to the writer as a quiet, unassuming youth fresh from Wanganui Collegiate School who began studying for a degree at the Canterbury School of Forestry in 1927. Academically well equipped, he took his degree in the minimum four years; and his farming background made him a top-notch field man with axe or slasher, compass, chain or horse, the working tools of the junior forester forty years ago. Later, Hocking was in his day one of the "young Turks" of forestry, who did not believe — and said so in no uncertain terms — that working as a labourer in a relief camp at Hanmer Forest was giving himself and the country an adequate return from his professional training.

Hocking's next step was to the Forest Service Head Office in Wellington where, still with labourer's status, he was general factotum to the Chief Inspector, C. M. Smith, for two years. As an earlier incumbent of the same exalted office, one can vouch for the educative value of that experience.

Promoted in 1935 to the dizzy heights of forest guard, that "dodo class" staff group which was later translated to the foreman-ranger category, Hocking worked in the Ohakune



district until a breakdown in health forced his retirement from the forestry scene for over five years. Only those who knew him during that period will be aware of the fortitude, albeit with no great patience, he showed throughout his protracted illness; nor could one cease to admire the hard work, both physical and intellectual, he later contributed to the cause of forestry, despite severe and permanent physical limitations.

Pronounced fit to return to duty in 1943, Hocking spent practically the whole of his remaining career stationed at Palmerston North where he became, by unanimous if unspoken consent, "Mr Wellington Conservancy". His knowledge of his own Conservancy, its people, its resources, its potential and its needs was encyclopaedic; and memorials to Gerald Hocking will long remain standing in truly "permanent materials" — forests of his own creating.

Probably on the basis that the only way to get an unpopular job done is to "ask a busy man", Hocking inevitably became editor of the *New Zealand Journal of Forestry*, holding that post from 1943 to 1951. During that era the forestry profession was almost clam-like in the literary sense, and his contributions, both in editorial and in editorship, were outstanding. He was also the New Zealand representative at the British Commonwealth Forestry Conference held in Canada in 1952, an assignment that could well have daunted lesser men in his position.

Gerald Hocking retired from the Forest Service at the end of 1968, and died at Palmerston North on 17 September last. The sympathy of all who knew him will go to his wife, June, her son and two daughters. He was a man who achieved much, in no easy circumstances, and one who will hold a place of respect and affection — and admiration yes — in the hearts and minds of his contemporaries and colleagues while life lasts.

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