

# NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF FORESTERS — THE FOUNDING YEARS

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As we celebrate today the fiftieth year of our Institute, it is interesting to turn back to the records of our initial years, and see how it all began.

The first tangible steps were taken at a meeting in the Forest Service Head Office in Wellington, on 27 and 28 April 1927, "to discuss matters regarding the formation of a society of professional foresters in New Zealand." The date had been selected to take advantage of a week-long conference of senior staff of the Forest Service, enabling a good muster of those likely to be interested, without involving travel or the loss of working time.

An agenda signed by F. W. Foster as convener called the meeting for 7.45 p.m. to consider the following points:

1. Opening remarks.
2. Discussion
  - (a) Has the time arrived to found such a society?
  - (b) The meaning of the term "professional forester".
3. What should be the aims and objects of such a society?
4. Assuming (say) five classes of membership, what should be the necessary qualifications for election of a candidate?
5. General.

Those who gathered on this occasion were: Macintosh Ellis (Director of Forestry) and Arnold Hansson (Chief Inspector). These, together with Frank Foster, C. M. Smith and Mary Sutherland (graduates of British forestry schools) and Alan Perham (holder of a Lincoln diploma in agriculture), formed the nucleus of the service's professional division. Also present were the six Conservators, Messrs Campbell, Darby, McGavock, McPherson, W. G. and W. T. Morrison (C. M. Smith already listed above was the seventh, having been recently appointed to Nelson). Messrs Dolamore and Montgomery (Senior Rangers), Charles Foweraker (Lecturer in charge of the Canterbury School of Forestry), Bill Taylor (Forest Accountant — later to become N.Z. Trade Commissioner in Sydney) and Cam Malfroy (milling expert — a retired sawmiller recruited by Ellis as an adviser on matters affecting the timber

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industry). Apologies were tabled from Corbin of the Auckland School of Forestry, and from myself. Foweraker was, in fact, the only non-Forest Service person present.

The initial motion, "That Ellis take the chair", was easily disposed of, but the second item on the agenda gave rise to a lengthy discussion, in which some heat was generated. This was dispelled through an entirely innocent remark by Cam Malfroy that a similarity in name "would not be confused with the Ancient Order of Foresters, since that was a *friendly* society". Tension dissolved in laughter and the meeting moved on. Its thoughts were finally embodied by passage of the following motions:

That in the opinion of the meeting the time is ripe to found such a society, the name to be left to a committee.<sup>1</sup>

That the aims and objects be referred to a committee comprising Ellis, Foweraker, Hansson and Smith.

That provision be made in the Constitution for Inaugural or Charter Members.

Inaugural Members to be:

(a) Graduates in forestry with at least 3 years' practice in New Zealand.

(b) Lecturers in charge at the Schools of Forestry.

(c) Conservators.

A committee of Foster, Hansson, McGavock, and W. T. Morrison to go into qualifications and experience for proposed grades of membership.

The meeting adjourned at 10.20 p.m. and resumed at 5 p.m. on 28 April to consider the recommendations of the Committees. The following motions were carried:

The Society adopt as its Object a modified version of that of the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers, reading as follows: "The objects of this Society shall be to further the development of technical forestry, and the interests of the profession of forestry in New Zealand by encouraging achievement in the science of forestry, by creating opportunity for interchange of views upon forestry and allied subjects, and by fostering a spirit of comradeship among foresters."

The list of Charter Members be expanded to include H. A. Goudie, and Owen Jones — administrators of two of the major forest planting companies. [This provided an initial list of 17, comprising 8 graduates<sup>2</sup>, 7 non-graduate forestry executives<sup>3</sup> and 2 directors of forestry schools<sup>4</sup>.]

<sup>1</sup> I can find no further reference to this committee, to any report from it, or to any subsequent discussion of the name; and, unfortunately, memory does not help me here.

<sup>2</sup> Ellis, Foster, Hansson, Hutchinson, Jones, Smith, Steele, Sutherland.

<sup>3</sup> Campbell, Darby, Goudie, McGavock, McPherson, W. G. Morrison, W. T. Morrison.

<sup>4</sup> Corbin, Foweraker.

That the Charter Members be empowered to proceed with drawing up a Constitution, and other necessary formation business.  
That the Charter Members rank as ordinary members only, until the Constitution was drawn up.

The meeting then adjourned at 5.30 p.m. and the matter passed largely into Frank Foster's hands to finalise the constitution. In this he co-opted me on one occasion, and a most interesting trip to Auckland arose therefrom, but I cannot say my thoughts were of great value to him. I was still too new at the game to have any fixed ideas on the major problem — how widely to set the gate, and how finely to gauge the mesh. To me at that time it was entirely a new net we were fashioning.

The next meeting, again taking advantage of a Forest Service gathering, was held at the Forest Office, Whakarewarewa, on 13 March 1928 at 7.30 p.m. It is described in the minutes as the First Annual General Meeting.

After approving the minutes of the meeting of 27-28 April, 1928, the first business was to declare an eighteenth Charter Member, E. Phillips-Turner, a former Secretary of the Forest Service, who had just succeeded Ellis as Director.

The constitution and by-laws as recommended by Foster's committee were provisionally adopted and the meeting moved on to elect the first set of officers, namely, Ellis as President, Corbin as Vice-President, Foster as Secretary; Hansson and W. T. Morrison, and McGavock and Smith were the two councillors elected for North Island and South Island, respectively. The draft constitution and by-laws were then considered, section by section, and adopted with considerable amendment. The meeting then adjourned at 11 p.m.

This Annual General Meeting was followed by a Council meeting at 8.45 a.m. the following day (14 March 1928) at which the following motions were passed:

1. The Secretary to proceed to collect subscriptions at once.
2. The Secretary also to proceed to arrange incorporation of the Society.
3. Press notices and publicity to be approved by the President or Council prior to publication.
4. A list of names of suggested Honorary Members to be prepared for presentation to the next annual general meeting.
5. The Secretary to write to other societies, re exchanges, etc.
6. Consideration to be given to a reception of some sort for members of the 1928 Empire Forestry Conference.

The meeting closed at 9.10 a.m. with an exhortation for action "to get new members in".

The next record is of a Council meeting held in Auckland on 21 October 1928.

The Empire Forestry Conference had arrived in New Zealand, and local foresters had gathered in Auckland to meet the delegates. The proposal for a reception had been found impractical, but Messrs Troup of the Oxford School of Forestry and Caverhill of the British Columbia Forest Service had accepted the invitation to be present at a hastily summoned meeting of the Council.

Vice-president Corbin opened the meeting, and immediately announced the result of a postal ballot. This elected Hansson as President to succeed Ellis, who had resigned consequent on departure from New Zealand. Hansson took the chair, and welcomed the two visitors, who spoke of conditions affecting forestry associations in their own countries, concluding with good wishes for the success of the New Zealand Institute of Foresters.

Moving then to consider membership applications, Council:

1. Declared R. G. Robinson, Selwyn Plantation Board, and D. Tannock, Dunedin City Council, to be Full Members.
2. Approved the first batch of applications for Student Membership. Two of that batch, after a long record of service to the Institute, are with us today, namely, Barry Moorhouse and Alan McKinnon.
3. Declared Messrs Birch, Pollock and Forbes to be Associate Members (graduates not yet of 3 years' practice in New Zealand).
4. Offered Associate Membership to 9 prospective applicants on presentation of a thesis. (These were non-graduates holding executive positions. Two years as Associate and an acceptable thesis would qualify them for full membership.)

This latter decision had a repercussion in the appearance of two of those affected before a Council Meeting in Wellington on 15 March 1929 to ask that Council "relax the qualifications for membership, while still maintaining the dignity and professional aspirations of the Institute".

While this initial testing of the new net produced no immediate response it was followed by others, and resulted in a series of constitutional amendments over the years, as succeeding Councils dealt with the membership problem in the light of the position as they saw it.

The first such amendments came before the AGM of 29 May 1929, held in Wellington with an attendance of 8 members. This meeting elected Professor Kirk and Dr Leonard Cockayne as our first honorary members, and listened to its first presidential address — a well-thought-out appeal by Arnold Hansson for a lively spirit of enquiry in our approach to the many new facets presented by the New Zealand scene.

The Annual General Meeting of 24 April 1930 at Wellington before an attendance of 11 members was told in the annual report that total membership stood at — honorary 2; full 20; associate 3; student 8; total, 33; and that our certificate of incorporation had been granted on 26 September 1929. The meeting again considered constitutional amendments. It then decided to invite designs for a Common Seal, before settling to listen to its first professional paper — a study by Frank Foster of height growth of kauri seedlings and small saplings.

These Wellington meetings were already developing a set pattern — an austere one compared with present-day gatherings. We lunched together, but that was all. When our meeting ended the Wellington members rushed to their offices to make up for the time lost, then dispersed to their suburban homes. The few from afar had a meal in a Lambton Quay cafe before proceeding to the ferry wharf or the station for the Auckland express.

The AGM of 14 May 1931, again in Wellington, was informed that, in spite of resignations of Steele and Corbin, total membership had reached 50, and that L. J. Dumbleton had been advanced from student to associate membership, consequent on his graduation as the first B.Sc.For. from the University of New Zealand.

It was announced that Mary Sutherland's design had been approved for the Common Seal; that certificates of membership had been printed; and that these were being lettered as a spare-time service by one of our student members. (This was Bob Ingle, who later joined the staff of the Forest Products Laboratory in Australia.)

The first report from a Local Section, Christchurch, was tabled; and hopes were expressed to form a second in Nelson. Sir Francis Bell was elected as our third Honorary Member. We were asked to support a rebuttal to a newspaper suggestion that the Forest Service be merged with Lands Department as an economy measure. (The depression was already affecting many spheres of activity, with much worse to come.)

A proposal from the Canterbury School of Forestry that the Institute accept the School's annual journal, *Te Kura Ngahere*, as its organ of publication, with nomination of an Institute representative on the editorial committee, was approved for a two-year trial period. Tom Birch was nominated as the Institute's representative.

We then listened to two professional papers, "A stand of beech regeneration of known age", and "An approach to the management of the Westland rimu stands". It is perhaps noteworthy that, when "plantation forestry" bulked so exclusively

in the public view of forestry, the papers so far presented by Institute members had all dealt with the native forests.

The fifth AGM on 4 May 1932 was held in Christchurch, resulting in an attendance of 20 out of a total membership roll of 53. Council reported that it had considered the question "Should the President be someone not a civil servant?" and had answered "Not necessarily". We discussed a report that bond salesmen for a commercial tree-planting company were claiming that their firm had secured a long-term exclusive right to thinnings from the Kaingaroa Forest for their proposed pulpmill. (The outcome of this was interesting in that the Minister called for a report from Alan Perham and myself — one of the first in what was to become a long file of reports on the "Murupara Scheme", before it finally came to fruition.)

The AGM of 10 May 1933 reverted to the Wellington locale and had an attendance of 11 members. It broke new ground in that it was opened by the Minister, the Hon. Mr Ransom, and that Mr Leigh Hunt, president of the New Zealand Forestry League, was a special guest. There was also a field trip to the forests of the Wellington and Suburban Water Board in the Hutt Valley.

We discussed proposals for extensive felling of Southland beech forests, and endorsed a resolution sent by Council to the Minister asking that he safeguard the stands against the time when they could be used under planned management.

There was a resolution of support for the School of Forestry, threatened with closure as part of the Government's economy planning; and an enquiry was made into the employment position of forestry graduates. The arrangement re *Te Kura Ngahere* was reported as satisfactory and was to continue.

The AGM of 29 May 1934 saw Dr Cajander of Finland elected as our first foreign Honorary Member, and Jim Syme was awarded the Schlich prize. Council reported the advancement of Courtney Biggs and Alan Perham from Associate to Full Membership, and congratulated them on the excellence of the theses submitted in support of their applications. As it was now definite that the School of Forestry would close at the end of the year, arrangements were made for the Institute to take over *Te Kura Ngahere* as its own publication.

With this achieved, the Institute may be considered to have reached maturity. It is thus a fitting point at which to conclude this account of our founding days.