



RECENT EVENTS



KIRK HORN FLASK AWARD

T. Hatherton

The Kirk Horn Flask is the most historically valuable award in all New Zealand science.

1. It commemorates the recipient – **Thomas Kirk** – a man with no formal schooling but who became one of New Zealand's foremost botanical explorer/scientists and teacher at the Auckland Institute and Museum.
2. It commemorates the donor – **Captain Inches Campbell-Walker** – a member of the Indian Forest Service who came to New Zealand in March 1876 as the first Conservator of Forests on a year's trial.
3. And it symbolizes the start of Forestry in New Zealand, not tree-felling but forestry – for Campbell-Walker read the first forestry paper in New Zealand to the Otago Philosophical Society in 1876 – "*State Forestry: its aims and objects*".

Thomas Kirk and Campbell-Walker travelled the length and breadth of the country together inspecting and studying the forests and, as a first step towards a system of conservation, Campbell-Walker recommended that all the forests at the headwaters of all rivers in Canterbury be reserved.

Three years before, in response to public agitation about indiscriminate burning and logging of forests, the Government had passed the New Zealand Forests Act, but ironically, adverse economic times and vested interests caused the Forest Act Repeal Bill to be passed by the House of Representatives, though as in so many cases the Upper House showed much greater sense and threw out the Bill; but they could not ensure that money was forthcoming to continue the conservation initiative.

At the end of his stay in 1877, Campbell-Walker commemorated his association with Kirk by presenting him with a silver-mounted flask suitably engraved (see cover photograph).

In 1967 the flask was offered to the Royal Society by Mrs Lana Brown and Mr A.D. McKinnon "in the hope that

the Society may see fit to institute a prize for research in New Zealand forest vegetation and forestry, using the flask as a trophy to be held by each winner of the award in succession".

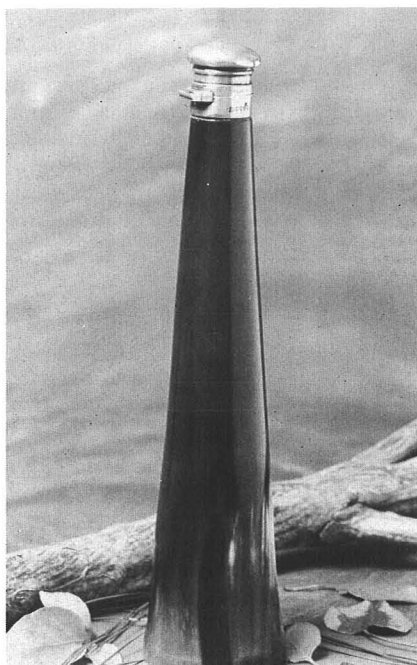
In July of that year, 1967, the Society accepted the offer with gratitude and immediately submitted the matter to "a committee of Fellows working in the fields of forestry and forest botany for suggestions on the way in which such a trophy could be used to promote higher standards of research in their fields".

Well – three years later Council of the Society said, "Where the devil is that report we asked for?" and instructed the Home Secretary to prepare a report for the next AGM.

Further discussions were held with Mrs Brown and Mr McKinnon and with the Institute of Foresters, and a full report was presented to Council by the Home Secretary, Norman Taylor.

It considered that the Horn Flask was much too valuable as a relic to be used as a trophy and passed from hand to hand. The following recommendations were made in the 1971 Report.

1. The Royal Society institute a new award for excellence in the "integration of science".



2. It be a medal (the Kirk-Walker Medal), bearing on the face an engraving of the Kirk Horn Flask surrounded by the words, "Integration of Science".
3. It be awarded for excellence in the integration of two or more scientific disciplines and of scientific disciplines with technology.
4. The award be accompanied by no monetary prize and supported by no trust fund. The only cost, the cost of striking and engraving the medal, be borne by the general funds of the Society.

The Home Secretary promptly died and his report was either interred or cremated with him, for the next event in this saga took place 10 years later when Mr McKinnon wrote and asked us if we would kindly tell him what had been done about the Kirk Horn Flask which Mrs Brown and he had donated to the Society for an award.

At that time I was Home Secretary and had never heard of the Kirk Horn Flask. The Society had moved location and the executive staff had all changed over the intervening decade so there was quite a flurry of concern and excitement until one of the staff pointed out that there was a funny-looking object in the safe where our Hector, Hutton and other medals were kept. There was relief all round when we found that indeed it was the Kirk Horn Flask. I immediately wrote to Mr McKinnon and assured him that I personally would take the responsibility of seeing that something was done about it.

At that time:

- We received a legacy of \$1000 which Council at my urging used to create a Kirk Horn Fund.
- Though I agreed with the previous report that the Horn Flask would be too valuable to use as a trophy, I spent some time visiting jewellers to see if horn flasks of that type still persisted with the idea that we would purchase a number and use those instead of a medal. But no. I then called on a number of craftspeople – after all we must produce a fair amount of horn in this country – no again.
- I considered that "Integration of Science" was not a phrase we could

The author: Dr Trevor Hatherton is the President of the Royal Society of New Zealand. This address was given at the 1988 AGM of the Institute of Forestry.

live happily with and anyway I felt this was getting away from the forestry association of the flask and the donors. Council agreed that we could make the award for forestry in its broadest sense – botany, conservation, management and technology.

It also seemed to me that the Institute of Foresters would know about forestry in its broadest sense – or indeed in any sense – so I approached the Institute suggesting that it involve itself in the award. Indeed it should be their award. In the interim, Lindsay Poole had donated some money to the Society and because of his forestry association we added this to the Kirk Horn Fund. We were thus able to hand over a sum of money of about \$2500 to the Institute if they went ahead with the suggestion.

It is a pleasure and indeed a relief that we see tonight the end or rather the end of the beginning of the Kirk Horn Saga. The Institute has had a medal struck which will go to the recipient of the award. The Horn Flask will stay with the recipient for one month and then be returned to the Society for safe custody.

The flask would contain, in my estimation, enough whisky to keep any forester happy for a day in the woods. I would propose that it be presented charged with the fluid, representing the proper use of the flask.

The Selection Committee has recommended that the first award of the Kirk Horn Flask be made to Mr E.H. Bunn for his contributions to forestry research in New Zealand.

I have great pleasure in presenting the charged flask and the medal to Harry Bunn.



Liza Crozier (Institute Vice-President) and Andrew McEwen with Harry Bunn (right). (Photo D.J. Mead)

E.H. Bunn first recipient of the Kirk Horn Flask

Harry Bunn was brought up on a farm in the King Country. He joined the New Zealand Forest Service in 1942 but spent most of the next few years with the RNZAF. After the war he did a B.Sc. degree and then a Diploma in Forestry at the Australian Forestry School in Canberra.

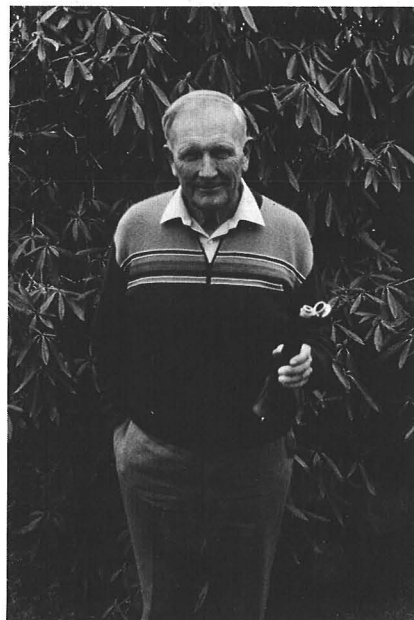
In 1953, on returning to New Zealand, he was posted to Pureora Forest where he spent three and a half years. He was then posted to Waipa sawmill for almost a year before joining the Forest Research Institute in Rotorua in 1957.

At the FRI he initially worked on rehabilitation of indigenous forests, on Eucalypts and on nursery and establishment techniques. However in 1961 he was promoted to Branch Head of Silviculture. Later he became Assistant Director of Production Forestry Branch and then Director of the Production Forestry Division.

There were several important influences on Harry Bunn:

1. **Max Jacobs** at Australian Forestry School. M.R. Jacobs was insistent on exploring "why" something should be and passed this questioning attitude on to Harry.

Harry took the matter further, however, by adding: "How is this information we have found out to be



Harry Bunn with the Kirk Horn Flask. (Photo W.R.J. Sutton)

used to help people do their jobs better?"

2. **Pureora Forest.** He noted during his time in establishment of cutover forest that many things were done by rote. People were not improving their techniques. In later life he always talked of the lessons of Pureora.
3. **Waipa Sawmill.** Not only did he look with some horror at the methods employed there but he as usual asked questions on the "why" of what he saw.

The deep knowledge of silviculture displayed in later life came, in part, from here during sawing studies of radiata logs.

4. **Dennis Richardson.** This gentleman took the young scientist and helped him tremendously in developing his management skills by showing him how to use the system (within reason, of course) to get what was needed to push research ahead.

Harry Bunn's influence on Forestry and FRI

Some eight areas can be easily identified:

1. In the field of silviculture his influence was felt during the 1963 symposium on thinning and pruning. He showed tremendous understanding of the subject and influenced his associates of the day: R. Fenton, W. Sutton and H. Beekhuis.