



No apology for being a radiata enthusiast

My advocacy of plantation forestry has received considerable publicity over the last few months. Most comment has been favourable. That which was not almost always centred around my strong advocacy of radiata at, what is interpreted as, the expense of other species. I make no apology for my bias. As a professional forester it would be irresponsible of me to advocate investment in high-risk alternatives. I wish we could confidently recommend another species, but is there even one alternative which comes anywhere near radiata in its potential usefulness, predictability or profitability?

It is timely to remind ourselves of some of the experiences with other species over the last 100 years:

- The forerunner of the NZ Forest Service – the Afforestation Branch of Lands Department was founded in 1896. Its species policy was to plant a specific tree for each specific end use, e.g.,
 - hickory for axe handles
 - catalpa for fence posts and railway sleepers
 - English walnut for furniture etc.

Radiata pine was not recognised as having an important end use. By 1909 the Afforestation Branch had planted 25 million trees but less than half of 1% of these were radiata pine. Almost all of those early plantings failed to achieve their objective.

- Although the 1913 Royal Commission recommended large-scale plantings of radiata pine it still considered the species to be only “a second class timber”.
- The New Zealand Forest Service was created in 1919. One of its first professional foresters, F.W. Foster, wrote of radiata in 1924 – “it will be very difficult to name a tree that is useful”. However he went on to say “several proprietors with longer views and sounder forestry sense are planting slower-growing trees which will yield higher-price timber”.
- The first planting boom (1926-1933) began with a major emphasis on radiata pine but ended with a higher proportion of other species being planted. In 1931 it became the policy of the NZ Forest Service to use other well-proven species and to ultimately reduce the proportion of radiata to only 30% of State plantations. That

policy remained until the end of the 1950s. Nearly all of those other species either failed or grew slowly. Most of those minor species have found only limited market outlets and most have now been converted to radiata pine. Of all the other species Douglas fir would be the major exception.

Comment from the President

- At the end of the 1970s the NZ Forest Service developed a policy of planting special purpose species (i.e. species that could satisfy markets for which radiata was not particularly suitable). The proposal was that 5% of State plantings were to be in non-radiata species. Very rarely was that policy implemented because of the problems of finding suitable alternative species. Other species have certainly had their opportunities. Few, if any, have lived up to their expectations. What evidence, except possibly for a few eucalypts and *Cupressus macrocarpa*, do we have that anything has changed? Even eucalypts remain under a cloud as the company

which invested heavily in them, NZFP, is now proposing to quit the species.

Can we as professionals advise investment in such unproven ventures? To invest in anything other than radiata is to speculate. It may prove a winner but chances are that it will not.

Even if the alternative species does produce a high-quality first log, and even if the top logs and chip material does find a ready and profitable outlet, there could still be problems. Our experience in exporting radiata has shown that it is not enough to demonstrate that it is suitable for a whole range of end uses. We must also guarantee large volumes of a consistent quality for a very long period (at least a decade). My fear is that successful forest owners of other species will be disappointed at sale time. Some may be lucky to find valuable outlets for their products. I suspect however many will be disappointed. They could search in vain for a buyer willing to pay a high price for a few logs of relatively unknown, untried and different species. It will matter little that it has desirable properties, an attractive grain etc.

I would love to be able to advocate confidently an alternative to radiata. So far not one species has emerged during the last 150 years which in any way matches the proven usefulness and predictable performance of radiata.

W.R.J. Sutton

FORESTRY IDENTITY

Mavis Davidson

C.G.R. Chavasse

One of the most remarkable members of our Institute is Mavis Davidson, a woman of extraordinary energy, initiative, industry and critical intelligence, who has indefatigably tramped over a great many of the rugged places in New Zealand and still, after 40 years' mountaineering, ski-ing and trout fishing, remains a keen tramp and canoeist. But Mavis is also a retiring and modest person who never sought the limelight and so remained scarcely known to most of our members. Yet those who have come to know her esteem her warmth and friendship.

Mavis is a keen geneologist. Her pio-

neer paternal antecedents were Cornish, and her maternal ones were Norwegian. She was born at Te Karaka, Poverty Bay, in February 1910, the seventh child of Thomas James Gedye and Dagmar Martha Melville Gedye (née Hansen), who had three daughters and six sons.

Her schooling, from about 1918, was largely in Poverty Bay – Tokomaru Bay and Gisborne – and Wairoa, Hawkes Bay, with a year in Dunedin; and finally at Brain's Commercial College, Auckland, in 1925. She then worked in both Auckland and Wellington as a short-hand-typist, ledgerkeeper and clerk.

In 1940 Mavis entered Victoria Uni-

versity College in Wellington. Her studies were suspended in 1942 when she joined the WAACs, New Zealand Army. She returned to Victoria in 1946 and obtained New Zealand University degrees of BSc in 1947 and MSc in 1950.

In 1943 Mavis joined the Army Officer Cadet Training Unit, and was commissioned, serving with 10th Coast Regiment at Fort Dorset and then Palmer Head (70th Coast Battery), Wellington. Her final year was at Burnham Military Camp, Canterbury.

In 1946 Mavis became a demonstrator and Junior lecturer at her alma mater, until 1950, after which she was self-employed or engaged in casual work. In 1958 she was appointed Biologist, NZ Forest Service, her main interest being the study of introduced deer, especially sika. This became her most important research project from 1962 onwards, major studies being undertaken in the Oamaru Valley (Kaimanawa-Kaweka Forest Parks) from 1963 to 1966, and Kuripapango in the southern Kaweka range from 1967 to 1974, for all of which she "retired" to a life of writing up sika research, exploring remote Westland valleys and now making helicopter sorties into Fiordland.

The list of her publications is too long to record here. It includes three co-authored books and, since 1960, deals mainly with studies of deer, especially sika. It says much for Mavis's tenacity of



Mavis Davidson

purpose that she has recently had a paper accepted by the NZ Journal of Ecology, and is preparing the New Zealand chapter for a Monograph on sika deer throughout the world for International Arbeitsgemeinschaft Sikawild (IGS), Mohnesee, Deutschland. In addition, she has written many mountaineering articles for "Tararua".

Mavis writes of her "squirrel-like propensity for hoarding old records" which has proved useful in her writing. She also cherishes old loyalties, as the long list of membership of societies demonstrates.

Most of these are scientific bodies, among them the Royal Society of New Zealand, of which she is a former Councillor, Wellington Branch; she is a foundation member and former Vice-President of both the Wellington Botanical Society and the NZ Ecological Society; also a former Councillor of the NZ Association of Scientists.

International recognition has led to a citation and gold badge of honour for research on sika deer, awarded by IGS. She keeps in touch with overseas research on deer as a member of the British Deer Society.

Mavis joined the NZ Institute of Foresters in 1963 and has received the well-deserved honour of being appointed a Fellow of NZIF.

Her love for the wild places of New Zealand has led to a life membership of the NZ Alpine Club, of which she has been Vice-President and Wellington Section Chairwoman; and over 50 years' membership of the Tararua Tramping Club, serving as Vice-President and Hon. Treasurer.

Since moving to Leigh in 1983 Mavis has joined the Warkworth Beautifying Society, the Warkworth Business and Professional Women's Club, and the Leigh and District X-Service Club.

Sadly her husband Bill (William Ernest Davidson) suffered from Alzheimer's disease and died in November 1990.

NEW INFORMATION

Pruned Stand Certification

Alan Somerville

By the year 2005 the predicted annual supply of pruned radiata logs is of the order 3-4 million m³. The majority of these logs will come from stands of 20-100 ha, pruned in the 1980s. They will be owned by large companies, and quality will generally be consistent and high.

Alongside this source will be relatively small quantities of pruned logs supplied by the small forest growers. These logs will be harvested from both stands and shelterbelts; their supply will be irregular and their quality highly variable, reflecting a wide range in attitudes and financial and physical abilities.

The large forest growers will generally have continuity of supply, credible stand records and if log quality is consistent they should be able to establish pruned log quality at the marketplace. To maintain their credibility and the opportunity for high returns they will need to define

log quality consistently and accurately. This may be assisted by sampling and evaluation exercises (Somerville et al. 1985).

The small forest grower is likely to have more problems in defining pruned log quality. These arise because:

- quality will be highly variable;
- the log buyer is likely to be mistrustful of the owner's word or data defining the effectiveness of pruning;
- it will be difficult to establish the boundaries of any pruning event within a stand and so sampling to determine quality will have to be extensive and costly.

Selling sample loads is not necessarily a successful way of defining log quality unless the sampling is correctly done, and harvesting equipment is too expensive to stand idle while prices are negotiated.

Alternatively, determining price once processing has begun removes much bargaining power and may mean the involvement of an independent arbitrator. Also it is difficult to imagine a system whereby a small forest grower sells logs to a large organisation buying logs from many locations (particularly so for off-shore trading) and log ownership is identified to the point where processing is completed.

Records

One solution to much of the problem of pruned log quality definition for the small forest grower is to have records of pruning that:

- are easily and cheaply obtained
- show the necessary information
- are credible
- are available.