

## FORESTRY IDENTITY

# John de Berri Graham Groome

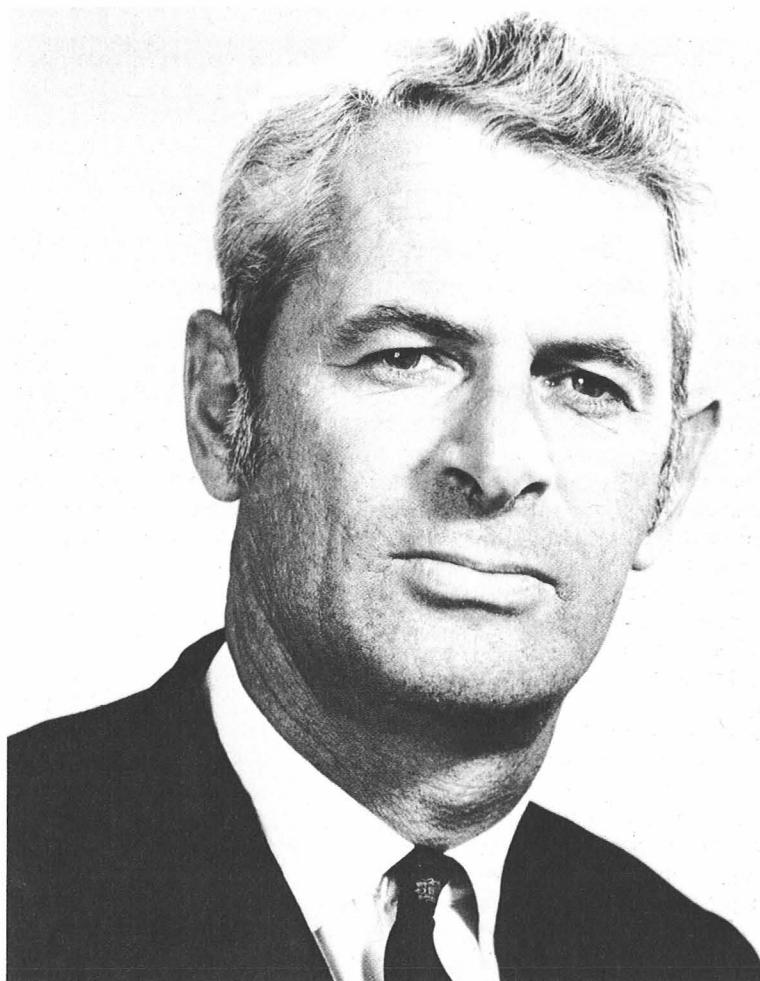
Geoff Chavasse

John Groome was born at Hastings on December 15, 1925. His father, Ben, was the Clerk at Kaingaroa Forest from 1929. At any one time he had to attend to the book-keeping for some 500 workers, who arrived daily by bus from Rotorua. He issued them with two blankets, a pair of boots, and a straw palliasse. They slept in tents and walked to work.

Ben's wife and three children arrived a year later; they formed half of the six-pupil school when it opened in 1931. John's first recollection of Kaingaroa was what appeared to be a train, which turned out to be the last remaining side of a square of two-man prison huts placed end to end. The prisoners who began the planting of New Zealand's largest forest had long since departed.

John's introduction to depression-style forestry probably led him, after schooling in Rotorua (1937-41) and Christchurch Boys' High (1941-3) to become involved in the thinking side of his chosen profession. With Ben Groome then in charge of Balmoral Forest, a steady supply of rabbit and deer skins helped pay for four years at Canterbury University where the demands of playing rugby for Canterbury and New Zealand Universities was often more important than academic studies. John, however, graduated B.Sc. and, with Tony Grayburn and Eric Ensor, became the first group of New Zealand students to pass through the Australian Forestry School in 1949-50. While at Christchurch, John had field experience at such diverse places as Te Wae Wae Bay, Totara Flat, Golden Downs and Karioi. These experiences were put to good use in 1954.

John always had a roving mind, and a comfortable public service job left him unsatisfied, so in that year he became Forest Manager for Hawkes Bay Forests Limited, which owned a small plantation near Lake Tutira, and discovered the realities of private enterprise. He was required to plant more land each year without incurring an overdraft or raising new capital. He could spend only what he earned from sales of fence posts and split battens together with radiata sawlogs to Odmins and Douglas fir thinnings to Holts. Such a disciplined economic environment was ideal preparation for the consulting career



John Groome

John chose in 1962. The firm he created, J.G. Groome and Associates, has evolved into the New Zealand based but internationally operating Groome-Poyry Ltd, of which John is Executive Chairman. Groome company representatives are also well-known in Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Western Samoa, Indonesia, Malaysia and China.

Joining our Institute in 1948, John started the Hawkes Bay Local Section in 1956. He later became a Councillor for four years, Vice-President for another four, President in 1972-3 and finally Immediate Past President. During this 12-year period John persuaded a reluctant Institute to draw up a Code of Ethics and to provide for formal recognition of professional consultants. The Consultants' Committee, to John's satisfaction, has

become a major influence within the Institute following changes to State and corporate forestry in the 1980s.

John also finds satisfaction from having publicly criticised the Labour Government's forestry policies before it became fashionable to do so; taxation disincentives, Cabinet members referring to forestry as another "think big" disaster, and the destruction of the New Zealand Forest Service, were all targets for his tongue and pen. This led to his resignation from the New Zealand Advisory Committee on Aid and Development, which he had chaired from 1980 to 1985. He realised that such a protest had little effect on government policy, but it helped to alleviate to some extent the bitterness he felt.

John's major interests have always been and will remain New Zealand's pro-

duction plantations, and the strengthening of the forestry profession. He is pleased to see the increasing development of forestry as a truly economic activity in New Zealand. From 1968 to 1991 he was an Executive Councillor of the New Zealand Forest Owners' Association and is now a

Director of the NZ Forest Research Institute Ltd. As a forest owner in the Tuki Tuki Valley and at Kaukapakapa, John looks forward to planting more forests with family participation, and profitably converting older ones.

Two of John's children have followed

in his footsteps; Kathryn is the Recreational and Tourism Planner for DOC in Westland, and Tony a Management Trainee for McVicar Timber Industries. John also is pleased to acknowledge that his wife, Judy, has become a valuable live-in legal adviser in forestry matters.



## NEW INFORMATION



# 'Tomorrow's Trees'

**"Tomorrow's Trees" by Lindsay Poole and John Johns. Caxton Press in association with Carter Holt Harvey Ltd, 1992.**

"Tomorrow's Trees" is a handsome book, reflecting both the very long association with forests and forestry of Lindsay Poole, the author of the text (his forestry career began in 1926, four years after the establishment of the Forest Service) and the professional skills and interest of John Johns, whose photographs illustrate it. Both are widely known and respected beyond forestry circles in New Zealand.

The theme of the book is the enormous potential for forestry and trees in New Zealand.

The early colonists, both Maori and pakeha, found an abundance of forest when they came here, and both in their own way treated it in a cavalier fashion. But trees have slowly established their place in our culture, as a part of our "heritage" and as an economic force capable of challenging most other land uses. This was neither painless nor by chance, and "Tomorrow's Trees" sets out to show how it happened.

The book begins with a brief look at some of the countries on the mainland of Europe which have for a long time recognised the wide-ranging value of their forests and managed them accordingly. There is a brief reference to Britain, which conspicuously has not done that, preferring to believe that there will always be wood somewhere else, and it is implied that this attitude is a part of the baggage brought to New Zealand in the second, European, wave of colonisation.

In New Zealand, forestry has, within the period covered by this book, been largely a government affair. In the beginning this was because of a wish to constrain settlement to at least the pace of logging the natural forest before it was cleared and quite early alarms about the

dangers of excessive deforestation. Provision of wood for the future, by its long-term nature, fell naturally into the prevailing view of government responsibility.

In the natural forest, foresters faced what was in the end to be an insoluble problem of abundance of wood, apparently slow growth rates, forest complexity and political short-sightedness: the vote was for land and cheap wood, and as Sir Francis Bell said when introducing the Forests Act (1921/22):

"Land which is suitable for settlement can never be held with trees upon it on any considerable area. It is desirable that the country should

radiata pine, that the present forest industry is based, an industry which has already moved into third place in the national export league, and one whose earnings are set to grow by three to five times in present-day values over the next 25 years as the plantation resource matures into sustainable full production. A large part of the book is given to explaining how this happened and the future of other introduced trees whose time and place is still to come.

A central theme of the book is that none of this happened by accident. Resources were assessed, demands projected, and a rate and scale of plantation establishment set to allow for replacement of the natural forest cut as it came to an end.

Planting was concentrated in specific areas to provide a sufficient resource on which to found export-oriented industries. Research into sustainable management practices for indigenous forest was undertaken with some successes (the beeches and kauri) and some failures (most podocarps).

There was also private sector investment in plantations to the extent of about half the total area planted, but, significantly, most of this was by large companies and very little by farmers. Trees remained, for most New Zealanders, someone else's business.

Then in 1984 began a process which in the eyes of the author merely illustrated once again the indifference of politicians to the value of forests: the incoming Labour Government set in train plans to abolish the Forest Service and to sell off its plantations. Natural forest would pass into the control of a new Department of Conservation with a generally preservationist mandate.

Thus "Tomorrow's Trees" ends on a pessimistic note, questioning whether there can be a tomorrow for forestry in a free-market situation.

## BOOK REVIEWS

understand that fact. It is no use for forestry to set itself against settlement, though forestry can demonstrate that it can employ more men per acre than settled land can. But our habit and methods in this country are established and settlement is the first aim."

In this context the natural forest was seen not to be a sustainable resource, and future wood supply would have to come from plantations of introduced trees. Like agriculture, forestry would depend on immigrants, and "Tomorrow's Trees" does not regret the end of unsustainable logging in the natural forest.

Economic forestry, therefore, grew up as the cinderella of land uses, on country judged unsuitable for settlement.

Fortunately for foresters, there was from the early days of European settlement a vigorous, if eclectic, interest in tree planting, which gave a very good base of knowledge for plantation forestry.

It is on one of these early immigrants,