
Obituaries

Stephen H. Spurr 1918-1990

Stephen Spurr died in June 1990; the Institute of Forestry regrets that it has taken so long to produce this obituary.

Stephen Spurr was an Honorary Member of the Institute, perhaps its most distinguished Honorary Member. He was given this appointment in 1961 very soon after his sojourn as a Fulbright Research Scholar at the Forest Research Institute, Rotorua.

I first knew Stephen in the late 1940s. He was a most likeable and impressive young man, destined for a distinguished career in American and world forestry. He was then Associate Professor of Forestry at Harvard University and there and later at the University of Michigan he made a name for himself as the author of three standard textbooks, on aerial photographs, forest inventory, and aerial photogrammetry. These were most impressive publications, the more so since they were specialist documents and Stephen was far from being a specialist – rather he was a very good and very wise all-round forester with a full appreciation of the social, environmental as well as the commercial implications of forestry.

Stephen went to Michigan as Professor of Silviculture in 1952 and spent nearly 20 years there, rising to Dean of the School of Natural Resources, a school he had himself founded. He was a brilliant lecturer, recalled with fondness by all his students, particularly the postgraduate ones. In 1962 he produced his major work "Forest Ecology", which has been reprinted

twice. Such was Stephen's reputation as a thinking and practical ecologist that he became one of the American President's specialist ecological advisers and in 1966 in this capacity he produced a major study on the Rampart Dam in Alaska.

In later years he became more involved with University administration and particularly with postgraduate studies. He became an authority on educational matters generally and had many high honours in the field of professional education as well as of forestry. In 1967 he moved to the University of Texas as its President and was there until he died. His last few years were troubled sadly by heart problems and Parkinson's disease.

Stephen is best known to New Zealanders through his silvicultural and mensurational work at FRI. He found it a great experience. His wife wrote: "The time spent in New Zealand was a joy to us. The beauty of your country and the hospitality of your people made our sojourn in your country one of the highlights in our life." He returned to Rotorua for a few months in 1962.

In New Zealand he was immediately taken not so much by radiata pine, which

did of course impress him, but with Douglas fir – "the best planted Oregon pine in the world". He wrote two important FRI bulletins on New Zealand Douglas. He prophesied that in his lifetime Douglas fir sawn timber would be exported from New Zealand to the United States. He was very nearly right; it is Douglas fir saw logs rather than sawn timber which is now going to the USA.

Stephen was an extremely active and busy man. I have two vivid memories of this. When he first returned home from Rotorua he sold me his portable typewriter; he delivered it at my home just one hour before his plane left, having used it right up to the last moment to type an article. Then two years later he came down to Wellington from Tokoroa for a weekend and stayed at our Khandallah house. He said he needed some exercise; within one hour of his arrival we were at the top of the nearest big high hill, Mount Kaukau. He was indefatigable.

His impact on New Zealand forestry from all points of view was immense. He will be remembered for a long time.

A.P. Thomson

Brian Johnstone Allison 1927-1992

Brian Allison was born and brought up in the English Lake District. He graduated with a forestry degree from Aberdeen University in 1951. His analytical and reporting style reflected that university's method of training. For five years he worked for the British Forestry Commission as a District Forest Officer. In 1956 Brian joined the Commonwealth Development Corporation serving successively in Malawi, Swaziland, the West Indies and London. While in Africa he gained a real insight into the productivity and management of large teams of unskilled labour and what that could cost in forest management. He was often to remind us of this later. While in London he completed qualifications in management and accounting. By now Brian realised that there were fewer opportunities for him in Commonwealth forestry so he turned his attention to New Zealand.

He joined NZ Forest Products Limited in 1962 – one of a number of Aberdeen

forestry graduates recruited by Jack Henry about that time. With a family of three small boys he paid his own passage to New Zealand. Throughout the rest of his life he often praised the opportunities New Zealand gave his whole family in life style, education and careers. In addition the Kinleith Forest was large enough to allow him to develop his ideas on the holistic approach to forest planning.

Brian was appointed Working Plans Forester but his title was to change a number of times during his career to Assistant Forest Manager, Manager Forest Planning and Services, etc. While organisational charts and titles gave him some amusement, he realised they were essential in a big organisation but he did not let them stand in his way when he wanted to get his ideas across at all levels.

Forest planning became his life, to which he applied his intellect, imagination and innovative skills. Thus began a most remarkable 25-year period where Brian

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owners can be expected when the social or political environment encourages this. The Institute should adopt an unbiased role in informing firstly the membership and secondly the concerned public, of significant aspects of forest industry activity from which a judgement can be made.

The above report on the AGM motion is intended to provide such information on the Forestry Corporation of NZ and it is Council's view that no further investigation is merited, particularly in the light of recent statements on FCNZ's future.

Peter Olsen
President

developed a unique relationship with the company; with our industry; with the School of Forestry; and special relationships with people of all levels, variously as mentor, teacher, confidante, counsel and friend.

However Brian was not the easiest person to handle in a team because of his often unorthodox approach to things and occasional flashes of impatience. For example, he once said to a group of directors and senior managers: "If you ask me stupid questions, you'll get stupid answers", even though he was trying to win them over to his point of view.

His list of contributions to the sector were to be in the fields of forest taxation, forest valuation, leases and joint ventures, National Exotic Forest Description (NEFD), Resource Maturity Simulations (RMS), articles and books on total forest planning and university lecturing at many places. Another significant aspect of Brian's work was the efforts he went to in making sure that company executives and directors had an understanding of forest valuation, planning and control. He spent a long time with accountants, taxation experts, company auditors and directors, explaining his methods and developing concise regular reports by which they could check what was going on in the company's major asset.

In the early days his working plan records were kept in an accounting style, but readily available, in loose leaf form and aerial photos, to field supervisors. They were then converted to main frame computers and latterly to personal computers which he was working on when he died. His ideas on standards of forest description and reporting, although tantalisingly close to completion, were unfinished in a formal sense. He saw crop types in a forest estate as populations of growing batches to be sampled for comparison. He developed a set of measurements of forest mass by making minor adaptations of forestry concepts of the normal forest, von Mantel's allowable cut formula and the Faustman formula. The forest mass measures could then be used to specify a target state for a forest in a Forest State Report with deviations from the targets highlighted.

Brian had many interests, all of which he approached in his usual thorough and searching way. History and literature were often the basis of his quotes, so he always wanted to be near a good library. His last years in Christchurch gave him great satisfaction in this respect plus being in a city blessed with beautiful trees and gardens, an environment he loved even from his hospital bed. He was a good gardener himself and became an expert with maples.

Brian kept fit by cycling and walking. He did not live long enough to fully enjoy the patch of native bush he bought at Kumara. All of these things added to his love of New Zealand, the country which gave him unlimited opportunities for his interests and talents. He in turn will be remembered for his unique contribution to

total forest planning.

A.W. Grayburn

With input from M.J. McAlonan and A.G.D. Whyte

Peter David Cheney Bolton 1939-1993

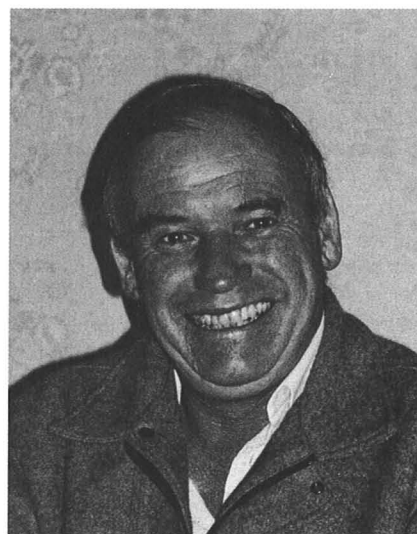
Peter Bolton died on September 7, 1993, at the age of 54, after a short illness.

At the time of his death he was working for a West Coast sawmilling company as their North Island timber sales representative. He will probably be best remembered by Institute members, however, for the time he spent as a nursery-manager in the central North Island, and as manager of the tree seed company Proseed.

Peter was born in Hawkes Bay and educated in Wellington. He joined the Forest Service as a trainee in 1956 and worked, among other areas, in seed collection and extraction. From 1961 to 1973 he moved out of forestry and worked in the horticulture industry first as a grower and then as a distributor. It was as a grower that he first showed the enthusiasm for technological development which would later stand him in such good stead as manager of Proseed.

He came back into forestry in 1973, as 2 I/C of Sweetwater Nursery in Kaitaia, moving from there to become officer-in-charge of Owhata nursery (1980-84), and then Kaingaroa nursery (1984-87). In those latter positions he was responsible for producing 8 to 10 million high-quality seedlings per year. It was in these jobs that his capacity to work effectively with researchers developed, along with the ability to meld new technology into the constraints of a production programme. He was also highly regarded for his advanced staff-development practices, and for his regular teaching at the FTC, on nursery and seed topics.

When he was appointed Manager of Proseed in 1987, it appeared that his earlier career had largely been in preparation for that event. And it is as manager of Proseed that I think he would most wish to be remembered. Prior to the formation of the company, seed orchard developments had been largely the prerogative of researchers. Peter brought to Proseed a highly entrepreneurial, market-oriented approach; a keen and questioning mind, and a capacity to cut through technical obfuscations.



Peter Bolton

He was able to listen to specialists, evaluate their offerings, and then make his own decisions, which were often contrary to the advice he received. As a consequence of these attributes, he took seed orchard technology in Proseed's orchards in the late 1980s to a level which most of the world is unlikely to reach for another decade.

It took him less than two days of analysis to accept that meadow orchards were the direction of the future. And despite the fact that there was not a meadow orchard in existence anywhere in the world, he proceeded to turn all his new orchard establishment in that direction. It is already abundantly clear that this was a top-quality decision which has set new directions in the industry, globally. But as with all major new directions, the developments were frequently not smooth. And there again, Peter showed great managerial skills in the way he resolved problems and enabled the technological advances to continue. His blend of practical technology and entrepreneurial vision was truly appropriate for the new directions of the 1980s. And his people management skills enabled his vision to be turned into reality.